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A  
**DISCOURSE**  
OF  
**LOGOMACHYS,**  
OR

**Controversys about Words,**  
So common among Learned Men.

To which is Added,  
**A DISSERTATION** concerning  
**METEORS of STILE, or FALSE**  
**SUBLIMITY.**

---

Both written in *Latin*,  
By **SAMUEL WERENFELSIUS**  
of *Basil*,  
And Translated into *English*.

---

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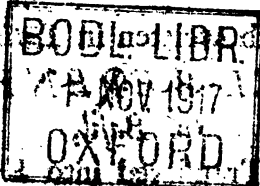
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THE  
*Author's Dedication,*  
TO THE  
Right Reverend Father in God,  
**GILBERT,**  
Lord Bishop of *Sarum.*

MY LORD,

THE common Excuse which  
Authors make for presum-  
ing to dedicate their La-  
bours to Persons of Distinction, is,  
that the Name of an honourable Pa-  
A 2 tron

tron prefix'd to their Works, will recommend 'em ~~to the Learned~~ World, and secure 'em from ill-natur'd Censures. If the Reason were just, no Man, I am sure, can urge it with a better Right than my self. For what Name is more universally celebrated, or more conspicuous in the Republick of Literature, than your Lordship's? Or what is more able to give this Treatise a general Recommendation, and preserve it to late Posterity? Whose Judgment of Things is more accurate, and yet, my Lord, who judges with greater Candour? Who does not acquiesce in your Opinion? And who wou'd offer to condemn what you approve? In a word, who wou'd except against these Discourses, if my Lord of *Sarum* shou'd please to honour them with his Patronage?

But, I must confess, this is not the Reason of my Addressing to Your Lordship: for tho it is a very common one, yet I cou'd not  
think

*The Author's Dedication.*

think it sufficient; since no wise Man will conclude this Trifle has Your Lordship's Approbation, because I have ventur'd to present it to You. This can lay no such Obligation on Your Lordship, nor have I the Vanity to expect it shou'd. The Dissertations, I am sensible, will stand in need of an indulgent Reader: but Your Lordship has made appear, by Your incomparable History of the Reformation, and Your other excellent Writings, and by Your private Conversation, that You have regard only to Truth; and that a Judgment, accomplish'd with so much Erudition, and ripen'd by so long a Practice, is not to be corrupted.

The only thing, therefore, which induc'd me to inscribe these Papers to Your Lordship, was the Admiration of Your Virtues, which are so uncommon in this Age; and which have fill'd me with a profound Respect ever since I first had  
the

the Honour of your Lordship's Conversation in my own Country; whence I waited on You to *Heidelberg*, where I was with you several Days, instructing my self by Your Discourse. Afterwards I saw You again at the *Hague*, and lastly at *Cleves*, in the Elector's Court, where I took my final Leave of Your Lordship.

Pardon me, my Lord, if an obscure Man, as I am, presumes to remind You of that Time, which I esteem the happiest Part of my Life, and can never remember but with inexpressible Pleasure. Suffer me to boast of this in Publick, something more immoderately, than in strict Decency I ought to do. And if your Lordship will please to put a favourable Construction on my giving the present Testimony of my Veneration for You, which began at that time, and has possess'd my Heart ever since, and which I cou'd no longer conceal,

ceal, I shall obtain the Sum of my Desires.

As to the following Book, Your Lordship will judg. of it, according to Your usual manner. There is nothing in it to deserve Your Liking, but the Aversion 'which the Author expresses to those vain Disputes, which divide the Church, and his Sollicitude to restrain so pernicious an Evil. Your Lordship will be concern'd, perhaps, to see how weakly I have executed so good a Design, which may persuade You to engage some abler Hand to undertake it. But I am perfectly easy as to this; since I am not seeking Your Approbation, which I cannot merit, but Your Good-will, which You are wont to bestow even on the Undeserving.

May God Almighty long continue Your Lordship the Ornament of Great Britain, and the whole Christian Church, and multiply upon You the best of Blessings.

*Basil, Nov. 4. 1701.*



## P R E F A C E.

**T**IS usual for Men to be less careful of their Words and Actions among their familiar Acquaintance, than when they appear in Publick, and so it was with me in composing this Treatise: which consists, as will readily be guess'd by the Diversity of the Stile and Manner, of Academical Theses, as they call them, wrote at several Times, for a Disputation. Labours of this Nature seldom travel beyond the Place where they are born, and are there read but by few, and that with no great Attention. I was not in much pain for the Judgment of my learned Countrymen, because they are my Friends, and wou'd be satisfy'd on easy Terms; especially since they expect nothing uncommon from me. I have follow'd therefore the Heat of Invention, as the Variety of that happen'd to lead me, rather than any Order; and was not so curious of my Thoughts, Words and Method; as I shou'd have been, if I had intended to please the rigid Censors, with whom the Commonwealth of Literature at present abounds. I ought, indeed, to have revis'd my Theses, and corrected them, before I had given them the Title of a Discourse; and accordingly I

was about to have done it, but I quickly chang'd my Mind: for a strict Amendment, I found, wou'd have struck out almost the Whole. If the Reader shou'd ask what Necessity I was under to publish them thus crudely, I might answer, they were extorted from me by the repeated Importunities of my Friends. But this Excuse has so often been falsely alledg'd, that now no body will believe it, tho' it is true. The only Reason, then, of my consenting to publish these Papers as they are, is, that I thought they wou'd be of Service to the World, notwithstanding all their Defects. For it is impossible to say what an Advantage true Knowledge and Piety wou'd receive, if all who apply themselves to Letters, whether as Authors or Readers, were duly sensible, how many Disputes there are in all Arts and Sciences merely about Words, and how few Controversys have been carry'd on without them; if they wou'd reflect on the Mischief of this to the Interest of Religion and Learning, and distinguish the several Kinds and Symptoms of this Distemper; and, in a word, if they consider'd the Causes of it both internal and outward, and what Remedys are to be employ'd either for Prevention or Cure.

I have not urg'd under these Heads all that might have been said, or was most proper, but what occur'd to me in the Hurry of Writing: I have illustrated the whole

## P R E F A C E.

*by such Examples, as my Memory (which is not very exact) furnish'd to me; in which if I happen sometimes to be mistaken, the ingenious Reader may substitute more pertinent in their room.*

*The Subject deserves to be treated by some Superior Genius, who has a better Judgment, and a larger Fund of Erudition and Experience to support it: I shou'd be glad to see this perform'd, and in the mean time the present Essay will not be unuseful.*

*I was desir'd by my Friends to annex a Dissertation which I writ, concerning Meteors of Stile, when I read Lectures on Eloquence in our Academy. I cou'd not refuse their Request; especially since some considerable Persons, into whose Hands it has fallen, were pleas'd to assure me, that they had read it with Satisfaction. Nor was it at all improper, I thought, to join these two Treatises together: for as it is a common Error in Logical Disputes, to confound a mere Verbal Difference with a Real; so in Rhetorick, they who affect Sublimity, are frequently betray'd into Meteors of Stile, or Fustian. If I have any where offended against my own Rules, in either of these Respects, it may serve to inform the Reader what strict Precaution is necessary against those Faults, which they, who write concerning them, cannot even at the same time avoid.*

THE

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THE  
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OF THE  
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CHAP.

## C H A P. I.

*Of the Name and Signification of the word Logomachy, or what is meant by Peoples contending merely about Words.*

**M**Y Design in this Essay is to apply a Remedy to a most pernicious Distemper, which has long afflicted the Learned World. Tho a perfect Cure is rather to be desir'd than expected, yet if I can give any check to it, I shall not think my Labour lost: For it's next to impossible to tell how much contending merely about Words there is almost in every Point, in which learned Men are divided; and how many Quarrels and wrangling Disputes, with which Learning is so miserably pester'd, wou'd immediately vanish, cou'd we but once distinguish Verbal Differences from Real. I am not unacquainted with the Stubbornness of this Distemper, the Difficulty of its Cure, nor how unacceptable it is even to the Patient to have it examin'd. But when all's done, a Patient is not to be given over for his Peevishness, or because he loaths the taking of Physick; nor is a Physician to be discourag'd by every Difficulty, but to do his  
B best,

Chap. 1. best, and leave the Success of his Endeavours to the Divine Providence.

I hope I may be excus'd if I call this Contending about Words a Distemper, before I shew the Resemblance it has to the Diseases of the Body ; having not only the Examples of the Philosophers, who call all the Errors of the Mind and Will by this Name, but the Authority of the Apostle *Paul* for so doing ;  
 1 Tim. 6. who giving a Description of one who consented not to the *Doctrine which is according to Godliness*, makes it part of his Character, that he was *νοσὸν κατὰ Λογισμίας*, sick of the Logomachy, the sad Distemper I am writing of, *Contending about Words*.

Now to prevent Mistakes, we must be sure to distinguish contending *about* Words, from contending *with* or *by* Words ; for the Debates of the Learned about Matters of Importance, whether by Word or Writing, if they are manag'd with Temper, and have nothing in view but finding out the Truth, are so far from being Diseases of the Mind, that they are indeed the best Preservatives against them : Argumentation being to the Mind what Exercise is to the Body ; it confirms its Constitution, keeps it from the Contagion of Error, and prevents it from imbibing Opinions, however plausible, which are not supported with solid Reason. But when, instead of calm Reasoning, we have Quarrels, Wrangling and Noise ; when sifting out the Truth is the least part of our Design, and instead of debating the Matter with Moderation like Scholars and Gentlemen, we rather seem to fight Prizes like Fellows in a *Bear-Garden*, making it the main of our Business

finess to expose, abuse, revile and insult our Adversarys, as if trampling on a Man wou'd really make us the taller: If when we can't fairly get the better of our Antagonist, we endeavour, all we can, to trick him with our Sophisms; all this is Quarrelling and Fighting rather than Disputing, and Words (which were given to Man for a nobler purpose) become only the Instruments of our Rage. Now that I may not always call this Lust of Quarrelling by the name of a Disease (it's indeed too mild an Appellation) What a Poison, what a Plague is it to Learning, to Religion, and to the Peace and Prosperity of the whole World! —Its Effects are indeed very scandalous, and I pray what are its Causes? (for I can't but hint at them by the by) Are they any better? How much of it proceeds from Mens haughty Pride, and an unreasonable impudent Ambition of lording it over Mens Consciences, enslaving their Minds, and making them think and speak no otherwise than we, forsooth, wou'd have them? Oh 'tis a mighty business with some People to gain Profelytes, and add to their Number, as 'tis with Tyrants to multiply their Slaves. And if any are so hardy as to cross their Designs, by denying their Assent to these Mens Opinions (especially if they are likely to influence others also to do the like) nothing will serve, but presently they must be treated as publick Enemy's. Immediately they divide, and the Game begins; every Man is at his Post, and defends his Quarter: Scoffs and Reproaches come thick and threefold, and what they want of Argument they supply with Calumny: *What, won't they believe as we*



**Chap. 1.** *do? Are we such Blockheads, such Buzzards, as to have our Arguments thus rejected, our Reasons thus slighted? We are as Wise, as Learned as themselves, and so they shall find.* Now whether this be rather to be laugh'd at, or lamented, I shall not at present determine; but can't help observing, that all the while they are thus together by the Ears, about the weighty Business of making themselves Heads of a Party, or such like, they wou'd fain persuade us that Truth alone is what they are concern'd for: Nay, I have almost the Charity to believe (considering how little Men are us'd to know, and how apt to flatter themselves) that they sometimes verily think as they speak. But be that as it will, one wou'd think a serious Lover of Truth shou'd esteem the Erroneous the Objects of his Pity, rather than of his Hatred. A Gentleman that has his Cellar well stor'd with rich and generous Wines, wou'd be thought, I fancy, to discover a strange Temper, if he shou'd fall out with his poor Neighbours for not being so well provided, or abuse them for not being so capable of distinguishing betwixt good and bad Wine as he. And if I having, in my Opinion, a very beautiful charming Wife, shou'd quarrel with every Man I met for not admiring her as I did.; I'm afraid the ill-natur'd World wou'd hardly forbear calling me Coxcomb. Men are generally ambitious of enjoying what they love without a Rival: And who has not observ'd how unwilling most Men are to have others thought as knowing as themselves? Have you found out the Truth? You are a happy Man; you have your Desire: But, say you, my Neighbours will

## *A Discourse of Logomachys.*

3

will not believe it. The greater is their Misfortune, say I: And was ever any Man in his Wits angry with another for being less happy than himself? What is it disturbs you? Why the Truth of the matter is this, Learned Men hate Contradiction, for the same reason as covetous Men do other Peoples Liberality; they reckon it reproaches them. They who dissent from our Opinions, seem to call our Learning and Judgment into question, and to prefer themselves before us; and this touches us to the quick; Flesh and Blood can't bear it. I say they seem to do so, for they don't always do so in reality. Men are not always of the same Opinions with others, for whom they have the greatest Veneration; not because they won't, but because they can't. 'Tis not in our Power to believe what and when we please. Wou'd you have me come over to any of your Opinions? In the first place, let me hear your Reasons, produce the Arguments with which you was convinc'd. Am I notwithstanding too stiff in my own Opinion? Why, 'tis because your Reasons do not appear to me sufficient, nor your Arguments conclusive. If they be so in reality, I'm sorry I can't see them in the same Light, and with the same Eyes as you do. What makes you angry? Why, say you, one of us must needs have a very great Defect in our Eyesight. Perhaps not; the sharpest Sight can't see every thing, and a Fool may stumble upon that which the nicest Observer in the World never took any notice of; So that, if in this particular I see more than you, I may be more happy than wise; if I do not, I am so much the more unhappy, as I can't

Chap. I. be made sensible that I am in an Error.

But to return from this Digression (tho I hope I have not been far out of my way) be pleas'd to remember, that besides this contending with Words already insisted on, there are too often Contentions merely *about* Words, to the Consideration of which we now proceed as the principal Design of this Essay.

Since by *Words* then we often understand not only a Composition of Letters and Syllables, but things of no moment, contending about Words may signify contending about Trifles: And what a considerable number of Books are written upon Subjects not worth a Thought? Who can forbear smiling, when he hears grave bearded Doctors dispute, whether the Fish which swallow'd *Jonah* was Male or Female? With which Foot *Aeneas* at his Landing first stept upon the *Italian* Shore? What was the Shape of a *Roman* Button? and a thousand other such ridiculous Questions: 'Tis well such Controversys are written in Latin; were they not, how wou'd they expose their Authors (and perhaps Learning it self) to the Contempt even of Watermen, Porters and Plowmen? What wou'd Philosophers, Schoolmen, yea Divines themselves be thought of? Who cou'd be otherwise than amaz'd, to see the *Eastern* and *Western* Churches divide upon the Question, whether Priests ought to wear long Beards? or whether Bishops might wear Rings? Of much the like Importance was that famous Controversy between *St. Jerom* and *St. Austin*, concerning the Plant which shadow'd *Jonah*, whether 'twas to be call'd a Gourd, or an Ivy-Tree. *Austin* confesses

confesses that the Church was in an Uproar when *Jerom's* Version was read, who thought it an Ivy-Tree: and *Jerom* complains of some who accus'd him of Sacrilege on that account; and he is no less sharp upon *Austin*, if *John Calvin* may be credited. Indeed I have often wonder'd to see Learned Men and Pretenders to Wisdom, contend as earnestly as if it were for Liberty and Property, when it signifies not one half-penny to themselves, or any one else, which way the Business is decided: But then the wonder in a great measure ceas'd, as soon as I became sensible that the Dispute was not about the things of which they seem'd to dispute, but about the Learning and Wit of the Disputants. You are mistaken if you think *Scaliger* and *Cardan* two such Coxcombs, as to dispute in earnest which had most Hairs on its Back, the Kid or the Goat? The Question in debate was, which of those two Gentlemen was the better Scholar and more ingenious Man: Some thinking nothing more likely to advance their Reputation in Learning, than their being able to talk well of empty insignificant Subjects; but when all is done, trifling Questions are no better than Trifles, let them require never so much Learning and Ingenuity to decide them: So true is that of *Martial*,

*Turpe est difficiles habere nugas,  
Et stultus labor est ineptiarum.*

If we take Words in a proper sense, contending about them may have different Significations. Sometimes we dispute about Words

Chap. I. designedly and professedly, and to good purpose; as when we endeavour to explain the meaning of a Law, a Will, or the Holy Scriptures: tho perhaps this may, in effect, be rather thought arguing about Things, than hickering about Words. Sometimes Words, as such, are thought by learned Men worthy of their Consideration: Thus Grammarians and Criticks treat of the Pronunciation, manner of Writing, Declining, Signification, and Construction of Words; and I shou'd be the last who shou'd blame them for it, wou'd they allow more of their time for nobler Studys, and if they cou'd persuade themselves to be of different Opinions concerning these Matters without quarrelling. But the Scolding of the Grammarians is quite grown into a Proverb. Translate an Expression, or use but a Word which these Gentlemen please to think improper, and you have great luck if you be not expos'd in Print as one of the greatest Fools under the Sun. But in the mean time have a care how you accuse them of Barbarisms or Blunders: They wou'd sooner forgive you if you charg'd them with Clipping and Coining. What Work did *Erischlinus* and *Crusius* make heretofore? They were so enrag'd that they cou'd not find Words bad enough to bestow upon one another; they call'd one another all the Knaves, Fools and Beasts they cou'd think of. And pray what did they differ about? No Trifle, you may be sure; you have *Erischlinus's* word for it. What then? Why truly *Crusius* (or cruel *Mr. Crucible*, as his witty Adversary nicknames him) takes upon him to give Rules relating to Nouns, Participles and Supines,

in

in an improper place of the Syntax. And Chap. 1, was ever such a thing as that known? What a sad Man was this *Cruicius*, and what abundance of Reason had his Antagonist to be angry? I have upon this occasion made use of these two Mens Names, not to reflect upon them, but to warn others not to quarrel about a Word, whether of Latin, or any other more uncommon Language; Skill in Languages being so apt to make Men proud and vain, when notwithstanding it's a certain Truth, that however necessary and commendable it be, it is neither Learning nor Wisdom, but at best the Road which leads to it. That I may not seem to advance so dangerous a Proposition of my own Head, pray hear what the truly learned *Brian Walton* has said on this Subject; and surely he who, with so great success, had taken such vast Pains, and was so deservedly famous for his vast Acquaintance with the Languages, cou'd not well be suppos'd to speak any thing out of prejudice, that might unjustly lessen the Reputation of Philological Studys. In his *Apparatus Bibl. Proleg.* 1. §. 24. after many things very handsomly and judiciously said to recommend to us the Study of the Languages, he thus concludes: " Before I  
" put an end to this Dissertation, I can't but  
" take notice of the Superciliousness of those  
" Pretenders to Learning; who tho perhaps  
" they know no more than the Names of the  
" Sciences, have no sooner got a smattering  
" of the Languages, than they are wonderfully puff'd up, grow insolent, and treat  
" Men, ten times their Superiours in all sorts  
" of valuable real Knowledg, with as much  
" Contempt

Chap. I. "Contempt as if they were not worthy to carry their Books after 'em. Such ought to know, that the Knowledge of Words is no more than a Path to lead us to the Knowledge of Things, and valuable only as it serves that Design; this latter being that which entitles a Man truly learned: (Languages being as the Shell, and the Knowledge of Things the Kernel.) They therefore who make no farther Advances towards Learning, than to understand the Languages, are like those who sit down in the Porch and never enter the House, nor view the Rooms: And consequently may be call'd Sciolists, Grammarians or Criticks; but can never merit the Character of Learned Men." Thus far Dr. *Walton*, whose Authority perhaps may have some Influence on those Gentlemen who wou'd think it an unpardonable Presumption in such as me, to pretend to correct 'em.

But I must not forget the Criticks: If any in the World may be said to make a Noise about nothing, These are the Men. What a Company of Buzzards were our Fore-fathers, says one, to read such a Word or Expression of an old Author, as they did! They ought to have read it, as I have corrected it. You corrected it! says a second, I beg your Pardon; I was the first who corrected it. No matter who corrected it, says a third, for it's insufferable Nonsense, and a matter of dangerous Consequence to alter a Letter! — Why, Sir, What's the matter? Please to inform us, if it be not above the reach of us ordinary Scholars, what 'tis you differ about. Not a small Matter you may assure your self; but

## A Discourse of Logomachys.

11

but about the right pointing a Sentence, or Chap. 1.  
spelling a Word: for instance, whether you  
ought to read *Vergilius* or *Virgilius*; *Agellius*  
or *A. Gellius*; *Carimonia* or *Ceremonia*; *Mun-*  
*ditia* or *Munditie*.

I wou'd by no means endeavour to lessen  
the just Esteem the World has for those who  
give us correct Editions of antient Authors.  
I know it requires vast Reading, and a good  
Judgment, as well as a good Stock of Pa-  
tience, to free those Authors from the Injurys  
done 'em by the Ignorance and Barbarity of  
former Ages. None but *Hercules* cou'd cleanse  
*Augas's* Stable. But then it might be consi-  
der'd too, that tho that was a great Work,  
yet 'twas not the most glorious of *Hercules's*  
Labours. I cou'd wish therefore, that these  
ingenious Gentlemen wou'd learn from his  
Example, not to content themselves with  
such comparatively mean Performances, as the  
correcting Words or Expressions of other  
Men; however not to contend about 'em, as  
about Matters of Life and Death; but to im-  
ploy some of their Time and Parts in confuting  
practical Errors, and in searching after some-  
thing which may be of Use to Mankind;  
something apt to enlighten the Understan-  
dings, or reform the Manners of an ignorant  
and licentious Age. But instead of this (to  
use the Words of a great Critick) some are so  
studious of Antiquity, that they almost forget  
their own Christian Names; are continually  
poring upon old worm-eaten Manuscripts,  
and decay'd Monuments, where they may look  
every Day in the Year, from Sun-rising to Sun-  
set, and never be the wiser. But if they find  
any thing that's new, be it ever so trifling, they  
are



Chap. 1. are immediately, in their own Conceits, as Great as *Augustus*. No wonder then if they quarrel about Trifles who mind little or nothing else!

But of all Contentions about Words, I know none more foolish in it self, or mischievous in its Consequences, than when Men believe themselves (or at least pretend) to dispute about things of the greatest moment, when in truth their Differences are merely about Words: when they mean the same thing, but expressing themselves different ways, and not having the Acuteness to understand each other, they fall together by the ears. This is just the same as if an *Englishman* shou'd challenge a *Persian* for not putting off his Hat to him, interpreting it as an Affront, when at the same time the well-meaning *Persian* committed nothing to testify his Civility which he had been acquainted with in his own Country. Such Disputants, to Men of clearer Heads, are no less ridiculous than two blind Men wou'd be who shou'd flourish their Swords very angrily, as if they wou'd cut one another as small as Atoms; but were plac'd at such a distance, that they cou'd do one another no manner of Hurt. For, like them, these Contenders about Words combat with nothing but the Imaginations of their Brains, fighting with a Scare-Crow of their own Inventions, not having a true Notion of the Question debated, nor wherein they agree with or differ from their Adversary; if there be indeed a Difference, as oftentimes there's none at all.

In order to prevent, what I can, so great and mischievous an Evil; I shall, in the first place,

place, see who are chargeable with it; in the Chap. 2. next place, consider the several Kinds of it; then shew the Greatness of the Evil, then its Causes, then its Symptoms; and last of all, consider what may be proper for its Cure,

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## CHAP. II.

*Who are guilty of contending about Words.*

**I** Know of no Sorts nor Conditions of Men who are not often guilty of contending merely about Words: But, I think, I may safely say it's most of all practis'd there, where one wou'd least expect it; I mean amongst the learned Part of Mankind. Learning was undoubtedly design'd, and does naturally tend to help the Understanding; but (whatever be the Cause) it's certain, that it often happens here, as in Physick, that no Men are oftner sick, than they who frequently dose themselves with Medicines. Let any Man take a view of the several Parts of Learning, and strictly examine their Disputes, and he will be amaz'd to find such vast Discord between those who so little disagree.

One wou'd think Theology too pure and holy to be infected with such a noisom Disease: And yet that Doctrine which shou'd speak nothing but Love, Unity, Peace and Concord, is by many made no other use of than

Chap. 2. than to be an Argument for their Contentions; and new Words are found out to divide Christians into Sects and Partys, of which *St. Paul* complain'd long ago. It's too generally known for me to tell the World, what a hot Controversy there was heretofore, whether we might say, as the *Greeks*, there are three Hypostases in the Deity, or with the *Latins*, that there is but one. The *Latins* by the Word *Hypostasis*, understood what we mean by Substance or Essence; and therefore rather chose to say, there were three Persons, than three Hypostases in the Deity. The *Greeks*, on the other hand, reckon'd it intolerable to say, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit had but one Hypostasis; judging such an Assertion wou'd too much favour the Heresy of *Sabellius*. Well, what was to be done in this Matter? Why, truly nothing wou'd serve the Turn, but a Synod must be conven'd to compose this Difference: Accordingly the Bishops were call'd together from all Quarters; from *Italy*, *Egypt*, *Arabia*, and *Lybia*; who after they had heard both sides clearly, perceiv'd that the whole Controversy, manag'd with so much Uncharitableness, was a mere Logomachy, a Contention about Words. Nor have other Doctors of the Church been less faulty: Some of 'em treating of the Doctrine of the Trinity, use the words *Cause* and *Effect*: others reject them as dangerous: Some talk of *Order* between the Persons of the Sacred Trinity; others can't bear to hear it: The *Latins* make it the Property of the *Son* to be the Image of the Father; the *Greeks* think it common to him with the Holy Spirit: *Basil* won't have the *Son* call'd the

the Offspring of the Father; others have Chap. 2.  
thought it a matter indifferent. That famous  
Controversy, which made such a Distraction  
betwixt the *Greek* and *Latin* Churches con-  
cerning the Procession of the Holy Spirit,  
whether 'twas from the Father and the Son,  
or from the Father by the Son, was, in the  
Opinion of many, mostly about Words. And  
if we may believe a modern Philosopher, the  
Difference between *Nestorius* and the Ortho-  
dox was much of the same Nature, and  
he was unjustly condemn'd by the Council at  
*Ephesus*: but, however that was, I believe  
we may not scruple to affirm, that some  
heretofore (and perhaps others at this Day in  
the *Greek* Church) have with *Nestorius* unwa-  
rily deny'd the Virgin *Mary* to be the Mother  
of God, who mean the same thing with us,  
and do not with *Nestorius* divide one Christ  
into two Christs. In the Time of *Charles*  
the Great, there was a mighty Stir on this  
Occasion: *Felix*, a *Spanish* Bishop, taught that  
Christ, according to his Human Nature, was  
not the Son of God properly, but only by  
Adoption: An Assertion in sense not much  
unlike that of a Question afterwards debated  
by the Schoolmen, whether Christ, according  
to his Human Nature, was the Servant of  
God; as also to that which at this time  
troubles some, viz. Whether Jesus Christ, as  
Mediator, ought to be worship'd. The  
Question, as I said, being then, Whether  
Christ, consider'd in his Human Nature, was  
the proper or adopted Son of God.

*Felix* thought him the Son of God only by  
Adoption; of which Opinion also was *Eli-*  
*pandus* of *Toledo*, who was so fierce for it, that  
he

Chap. 2. he call'd those who were of another Mind; the Servants, Disciples, and Fore-runners of Anti-Christ; and treated them as Hereticks fit to be rooted out from off the Face of the Earth: But Pope *Adrian*, thinking this Notion border'd upon the Heresy of *Nestorius*, of two Persons in Christ, condemn'd it as Heretical in three Councils; in one of which the Emperor *Charles* was said to be present. And yet *George Calixtus* has fully prov'd the whole Controversy a mere Logomachy.

They who know any thing of the Schoolmen, need not to be inform'd what Contentions about Words there are in the numerous Controversys between the *Nominals* and *Reals*, the *Thomists* and *Scotists*; how merely for Disputation sake, they have obscur'd Theology with dark barbarous Words and Phrases; and disputed about 'em, rather than want Matter of Contention. Is it not a very pretty Enquiry, Whether the Sacraments be in any Predicament? Whether Baptism perform'd in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be valid? Whether an Ass can drink Baptism? I cou'd give other Instances, but am asham'd to mention 'em. I wish Theology were at this Day free from such Stuff, of which wise and pious Men have often and do still complain to little purpose. The Emperor *Justinian*, says *Joh. Claubergius*, in his Institutions. did us the Service, and himself the Honour, by abrogating the scrupulous Observations of starcht, subtil Forms and Nicetys, to reduce the Study and Practice of the Law to its native Simplicity and Plainness. It wou'd be happy for the Christian World, cou'd it find a Man who wou'd do  
so

so much in favour of Theology; who re-  
jecting litigious Intricacys, needless Curio-  
sitys, and vain Nicetys, which the School-  
Philosophy has introduc'd into our Theology,  
wou'd reinstate it in its antient Majestick  
Purity. If, what *Hen. Alving* slightly attempt-  
ed, under every Head of Divinity Verbal  
Controversys were separated from Real; and,  
in every Controversy, what *did not* really  
concern the Question in Debate, was distin-  
guish'd from what *did*: a multitude of Dispu-  
tations wou'd be for ever silenc'd. But this  
is rather to be wish'd than expected in our  
Days: as it's safer to lament the Faults of our  
Age than to reprove 'em.

As for the Lawyers, I have little to say  
to 'em; they are Gentlemen I don't care  
to be much concern'd with: but when I see  
Books written on the Question, Whether  
Brutes are subject to Law, or capable of do-  
ing Right and Wrong; I suspect them also  
sometimes guilty of contending about Words.  
For, let 'em but explain what they mean by  
the word *Law*, and the Inquiry will soon be  
at an end. Besides, how apt are they to be  
angry, if any unacquainted with Law-Terms  
don't call every thing by the same Name as  
they do, tho they mean the same thing?  
And, I can't but mention, what I have often  
observ'd of those who endeavour to explain  
the Law of Nature, that they frequently con-  
tend merely about Words, when they en-  
quire, Whether any thing be of Natural  
Right? One tells you, for instance, that the  
Eighth Commandment is not part of the  
Law of Nature: Another immediately is  
grievously scandaliz'd at such an Assertion,  
C and

Chap. 2. and not without reason, if both meant the same thing. But if by the Law of Nature no more be meant than that Original Natural Right resulting from that State in which Mankind was suppos'd to be, antecedent to any Compact, and before the Division of Things; the difference wou'd soon vanish.

The Physicians, one wou'd think, of all Men shou'd have little occasion of contending about Words; since the Subject of their Disquisitions are things which come under the Notice of the Senses. And ybt I'm afraid they will hardly be able to clear themselves from the Charge, that they oftentimes dispute more of the *Name* of a Disease, than of its *Nature*; and of the Method of its Cure. May they not be suspected to quarrel about Words, who, notwithstanding their different Hypotheses in Physick, in like Cases prescribe much the same Medicines? And when they dispute whether the Cause of Diseases be in the Humours or the Vessels; when undoubtedly it is in both; in the Fluids immediately; and then in the Vessels by their means: Don't they seem to differ sometimes about the Cause of a Distemper; for no other reason than that one enquires after the next Cause of it, and the other after that which is principal or more remote? What occasion the Chymists, with their almost new Language, have given for these verbal Contentions, let the skilful in Physick determine. I proceed to the Philosophers.

Philosophy has been pester'd with Disputes about Words, ever since it began to be divided into Sects. Cicero mentions a Book written by *Antiochus* an Academick, to prove that the Stoicks and Peripateticks agreed in the things

De Nat.  
Deor. l. 1.

things they held, but differ'd in the Manner Chap. 2.  
of expressing themselves. That Controversy  
between the Peripateticks and Stoicks is well  
known; *Whether any thing besides Virtue* (as  
Health, Riches, or Honour) *may be call'd*  
*Good?* and, *Whether any thing besides Vice* (as  
Pain or Poverty) *be really an Evil?* The Pe-  
ripateticks affirm'd it; the Stoicks deny'd it:  
and a Controversy of importance, you may  
be sure, they thought it! But what, did *Ari-*  
*stotle* equal Honour or Riches to Virtue? Far  
from it: He grants that Virtue is the chief  
Good which Man can enjoy; and that all  
other good things, however valuable, are not  
to be compar'd with it. On the other hand,  
do the Stoicks absolutely reject and renounce  
Riches, &c. which they won't allow to be  
good things? No such matter: Tho they are  
not good things, yet they are preferable to  
their Contrarys. Well, are these Contrarys,  
(Pain, Poverty, &c.) Evils, and to be a-  
voided? That they may be avoided, the  
Stoicks will grant you; but Evils, it seems,  
they are not! *Cicero*, methinks, exposes these  
Men very handsomly: "The Stoicks, says *Tusc. 2.*  
" he, conclude from their Sophisms, that  
" Pain is no Evil; as if the Dispute were  
" not of the Nature of the thing, but what  
" Name to give it. Pray Master *Zeno*, says  
" he, how can that which is terrible, dread-  
" ful, and calamitous to me, be no Evil?  
" Why, say you, nothing is evil, but what  
" is dishonest and vicious. But, I say, you  
" trifle, and answer nothing to my Question:  
" I know as well you that Pain is not Wic-  
" kedness; therefore don't equivocate, but  
" answer me directly, Whether it be not for  
C 2 " my



Chap. 2. “ my benefit to be out of torment? Not at  
 “ all, say you: for nothing but Virtue can  
 “ make a Man happy. Why then must we  
 “ guard against Pain? Because, say you, it’s  
 “ unpleasant, against Nature, grievous, and  
 “ hard to be born. Agreed! The very same  
 “ thing which I say; the only difference is,  
 “ what I call by one name, *Evil*, you describe  
 “ by half a score.” In another place he in-  
 troduces *Piso* laughing at the Stoicks for de-  
 nyng Riches to be good things, but calling  
 them Preferables; when the word *Preferable*  
 has four Syllables in it, and *Good* but one.  
 That Controversy too of the Stoicks, Whe-  
 ther all Sins be equal, is a mere Logomachy.  
 For all that the Stoicks mean by it in reality,  
 is, that a small Offence does as truly, tho not  
 so far, depart from the strait Line of Right-  
 teousness and Justice, as the greatest Crime:  
 which no man in his wits, I think, ever de-  
 ny’d. The same may be said of that seeming-  
 ly monstrous Opinion of theirs, which *Seneca*  
 could not digest, *Ep. 113*. That Virtues and  
 Vices were animated; for by *animated*, they  
 were very far from understanding what we do  
 by the word. So in that Question, Whether  
 Sound be a Body? how plain is the Logoma-  
 chy! For, what wonder was it that the  
 Stoicks shou’d affirm it, who defin’d Sound, *Air*  
*put into Motion*? or that others shou’d deny  
 it, who with *Plato* thought it more proper to  
 define it, *The Motion of the Air*?

Another famous Controversy was, Whe-  
 ther a Wise Man was free from Passions, or  
 did only wisely moderate ’em? *Aristotle* was  
 for the latter; *Zeno* held the former Opinion,  
 for no other reason but because the word  
*Passion*

*Passion* is sometimes taken for Excess of Anger, to which Moderation is a Contradiction. Much to this purpose *A. Gellius* tells us a pleasant Story of *Plutarch*: *Plutarch*, it seems, had a Servant, of a self-will'd, perverse Temper, but a Pretender to some Acquaintance with Books and Philosophical Disputations; whom, for some Offence, his Master had one day order'd to be well whip'd. As soon as the Fellow began to feel the smart, he complain'd most heavily, saying he had done nothing to deserve such Treatment: but when he saw that this and his Outerys brought him little relief, he betook himself to another course, and soberly disputed the Point with his Master; telling him, it did not become him, a Philosopher, who had written a very good Book against Anger, to cause him, his Fellow-Creature, to suffer such cruel Effects of it. To whom *Plutarch* answer'd very gravely and calmly, " You think me angry because I order you to be thus corrected: but you are mistaken. Can you say that I change Colour or Countenance? Do mine Eyes sparkle, or do I foam at the mouth? Do I scold, or brawl, or say any thing unbecoming? These, whether you know it or no, are the Signs of Anger." And then turning to the Man that whip'd him, " Pray, says he, whilst this Fellow and I dispute, do you mind your business, and follow your blows." 'Twas not his Opinion, it seems, that a Philosopher was without just Resentments, but that he shou'd not let his Passions get above the Direction of his Reason. This same *Plutarch*, *A. Gellius* tells us somewhere, in impeaching *Epicurus* strain'd his

Chap. 2. words a peg too high. *Cicero* passes this general Censure on the Stoicks; That, they differ'd more in Words, than Sense, from the

De Fin. other Sects of Philosophers: "It's only a

Bon. & "particular Set of Words, says he to 'em,

Mal. L. 4. "which you have gotten different from other

"People, that makes you Kings, Emperors,

"Wealthy, Handsom, Free, good Subjects,

"Wise Men, &c. and all the rest of the

"World Madmen, Fools, and miserable

"Slaves." Their Paradoxes, he says, differ

but in the manner of Expression, from the

Tenets of other Philosophers; and at last

concludes thus of 'em: "The Stoicks, says

"he, hold the same things with the Peripa-

"teticks; but are more superstitiously tena-

"cious of the Words by which they have

"been us'd to express themselves; which be-

"cause they can't be prevail'd with to disuse,

"they appear unpolish'd, harsh, and ungen-

"teel both in their Writings and their Con-

"versation." And of the Academicks and

Acad. Peripateticks he says in another place: "That

Quæst. L. 1. "they agreed in Things, but differ'd in

"Words; and are in reality but one Sect

"call'd by two different Names."

What Sects of Philosophers, wou'd one

think, differ'd more than the Epicureans and

Stoicks in their Notions concerning the Chief

Good? Wou'd one imagine, that such a Man

of Pleasure (such a Beast some wou'd say) as

*Epicurus*, shou'd any way agree with the mo-

roose, rigid, and severe Stoick? And yet

there is no small Harmony in their Senti-

L. 3. de. ments. *Lactantius* says, That *Epicurus* plac'd

falsa Sa. the highest Good in the Pleasure of the Mind,

pientia. *Aristippus* in that of the Body; and that *Plato*

held true Pleasure to be the Effect of Prudence Chap. 2.  
 only. And *Epicurus* himself tells us, in his  
 Epistle to *Menæceus*, (and he is quoted for it  
 by *Cicero*, L. 1. de *Fin.*) That we can't live a  
 pleasant Life, if we behave not our selves wisely  
 and virtuously; nor wisely and virtuously, if we  
 did not live pleasantly. Whence it's very plain,  
 that *Epicurus* meant no more by Pleasure, than  
 that Tranquillity of Mind which results from  
 a sincere and hearty Love of Virtue: besides  
 which, if a Man be blest'd with a sound heal-  
 thy Body, which is so generally the Effect of a  
 temperate Life, where is the Harm of all  
 this? And what can it be but Prejudice or  
 Misunderstanding, that has made People so  
 severe upon him? "My Opinion of *Epicu-*  
 "*rus*, says *Seneca* (and I hope we may hear-  
 ken to a Stoick in this Case) "is, that his  
 "Precepts are faultless and honest; nay, if  
 "duly consider'd, rigid and severe. The  
 "Pleasure he talks of, is by no means that  
 "impudent Licence which some are pleas'd  
 "to indulge to themselves, but such as  
 "is accountable to and justifiable by Rea-  
 "son; being design'd for the Refreshment  
 "and Support of Nature, not to satisfy the  
 "Cravings of Luxury. So that to speak the  
 "truth, ill Men wou'd feign get a reputable  
 "Patron for their Uncleaness and Bestia-  
 "lity, and pursue the Pleasures without fear  
 "or controul, not which he teaches and ad-  
 "vises us to, but which their own brutish  
 "Appetites have dictated to 'em: and in the  
 "mean time wou'd have us believe that they  
 "act conformably to his Precepts. So that  
 "I must confess, I can't with the Multitude  
 "accuse *Epicurus* as the Patron of a vicious  
 "Life;

Chap. 2. " Life; but that he is ill spoken of undeservedly." Besides, methinks 'tis a most unreasonable Supposition, that the Philosophers shou'd so vastly differ, as that *Epicurus* shou'd reckon Pleasure the chief Good; *Aristotle* a desirable Good, but not the chief Good: *Zeno* shou'd think it a thing indifferent, neither Good nor Evil: That *Spensippus* and *Critolaus* shou'd reckon it an Evil; and *Antisthenes* the greatest Evil: if they were all agreed in the meaning of the words *Pleasure*, *Good* and *Evil*, so that there were no Ambiguity in them.

If we may credit *Aristotle*, what a vast difference was there between his Notions and those of *Plato*; and yet *Boetius*, the great Restorer of the Peripatetick Philosophy among the *Latins*, proves there was a greater Harmony between 'em, than is generally believ'd. And without dispute, *Aristotle* wou'd not have been found to differ so much from other Philosophers, if he had fairly given us their Meaning, and had not burnt their Writings (as *Plato* also wou'd have done those of *Democritus*, had he not been dissuaded from it by *Amiclas* and *Clinias*) and thereby render'd it impossible for us to know any thing of their Opinions but by his Misrepresentations. See *Plin. in Pref. ad Vesp. Joh. Picus Mirandula Op. tom. 1. p. 83.* for other Examples of Philosophers contending about Words; where also it's confidently affirm'd of *Aristotle* and *Plato*, that there was no Question in Natural or Moral Philosophy concerning which they were not agreed, tho they differ'd in the Way and Manner of expressing themselves.

To

To search among the School-Philosophers Chap. 2.  
for Contentions about Words, wou'd be all  
one as to make Enquiry for Water in the  
midst of the Sea. They very rarely dispute  
about any thing but Words, and therefore  
affect to talk in general Terms; and never  
descend to particulars, things intelligible, and  
worth our knowing. Is it not a Question of  
great moment, Whether Natural Philosophy  
be a Science or an Art? or, Whether there  
be any such Discipline? or, Which of these  
two Questions ought to be first propos'd?  
Whether Physicks be subordinate to Meta-  
physicks? and, Whether Physicks wou'd  
not be discredited by such a Subordination?  
What is the proper, adequate, and formal Ob-  
ject of Physicks? Whether it can be defin'd?  
In what Predicament it is? And whether it  
be in any? Whether Body, *as natural*, be  
the Object of its Speculation? And if so,  
whether the word *As* be *reduplicative* or *speci-*  
*ficative*? There are abundance of such other  
Questions not worth determining, which are  
as soon resolv'd as understood.

The Metaphysicks of the Schoolmen con-  
sist of little else than Contentions about  
Words. Did but the Metaphysicians under-  
stand one another's barbarous Jargon, the  
greatest part of their Disputes wou'd soon be  
silenc'd. To give an instance or two: How  
strangely were they divided about that Ques-  
tion, whether Universals did exist *à parte Rei*?  
The Reals, as they call'd 'em, affirm'd it;  
the Nominals deny'd it: and to fighting they  
go, from Words to Blows; for fair Disputing  
wou'd not serve their turn, (*Joachim Came-*  
*rarius* in the Life of *Melancthon* tells us, 'twas  
to

**Chap. 2.** so at *Tubingen*) and yet the Controversy was no more than a Strife about Words. If you had ask'd those who held the Affirmative of the Question, whether there was in nature any Substance which was neither Spirit nor Body, nor this, nor that, nor any other kind of Substance; but simply Substance, as sometimes we apprehend Substance, having our Thoughts abstracted from any particular Species of it? No man in the World, sure, who understood your Words, but wou'd disown so absurd an Opinion. And yet this is all which the Nominals deny. On the other hand, no Nominal will deny but that That which he conceives when he thinks of Substance, is truly in this, that, and the other Substance which has a real Existence. And this is all that the Reals contended for.

Many Disputations have been written concerning a *Suppositum*: One Question, not yet decided, is, Whether the Soul separated from the Body after Death be a *Suppositum*? No, says one, for it's not a single compleat Substance. What, is it not a compleat Soul? Yes, but it's not a compleat Man, till its Reunion with the Body. Well, all this I grant. Wherein then do we differ? Why only in the Meaning of the word *Suppositum*: You allow that only to be such, which is actually united with all the other Parts which Nature has design'd for its Companions; I give any single Substance that name, tho it be not in actual Union with the Parts design'd for its higher Perfection. And is it worth our while to quarrel about the different Acceptation of a Word? I cou'd easily demonstrate that the greatest part of Metaphysical Disputations are

are like these I have mention'd: as those about Chap. 2.  
the Questions, Whether every Being be One, True, Good, and Perfect? What is the Principle of Individuation? Whether Relations have any real Existence? &c. Their Disputations in Physicks are nothing better. As when they dispute whether there be any Motion towards being a Substance? Whether Generation be Motion? and, Whether it be instantaneous or successive? (which is only to contend whether the Alterations antecedent to the Matter's receiving the compleat Form, may be call'd a Part of Generation, or no) so, whether the Form of the Elements remain in mixt Bodies? &c. Their verbal Distinctions in Logick seem to be contriv'd purposely to amuse People, and to supply matter for everlasting Contention.

The modern Philosophers, particularly *Des Cartes* and his Followers, endeavour to speak as intelligibly as the Geometricians, and consequently have not so many Contentions about Words as the Antients and Schoolmen: and yet the *Cartesian* Philosophy has given occasion to some Disputes which are no better. For instance, *Des Cartes* says the Soul is nothing but Thought: Others thinking the Inference of this to be, that the Soul is an Accident of, and that will perish with the Body, exclaim against this Doctrine as inconsistent with that of the Immortality of the Soul. Whereas *Des Cartes* by *Thought* means indeed a thinking Substance; which he calls Thought, lest any shou'd imagine the Mind a Substance, from which its thinking Faculty was a distinct Thing, or a separable Mode: when for ought we know, its very Essence may consist  
in



Chap. 2. in actual Thought; it being certain, that when we separate the Idea of Thinking from that of the Soul, we have remaining in our Minds only a general confus'd Idea of *Substance in general*, such as we don't know to be in nature. Again, *Des Cartes* persuades us, as a Preliminary to our Search after Truth, to doubt of every thing. This People run out against as Scepticism, Atheism, and I know not what: when he means no more, than that we ought to give Assent to nothing, but what we see supported with sufficient Reason. And the best way to know this, is to suppose, not believe, every Proposition false, that we may with the greater Attention and Accuracy consider its Evidence; and may be able to give a more confirm'd, rational, certain and impartial Assent to its Truth, when we have seen and consider'd the Reasons for so doing. Once \* more; *Des Cartes* says, Spirits are in *no place* and *no where*. Presently some are under terrible Apprehensions, lest he absolutely deny the *Being* of Spirits, and think of nothing but Sadducism and Atheism: Others think it an unavoidable Consequence of this Opinion, that Spirits (and so our Soul) can have no relation to our Body. But even here, there is no such Heresy as they imagine: for *Des Cartes* supposes those things only to be in *Place*, which have the same relation to Place as Bodys have, which fill up some Space, and one of which touches another: and since

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\* Whether our Author has given us a just Account, and sufficient Vindication of *Des Cartes's* Notions in this and the other mention'd Instances, I leave the Reader to determine.

Spirits can't be said to do so, he denies them to be in a place *properly*; or, which is the same thing, says they are no where. He said, *God is here in our part of the World only by his Operations*; but meant not, with *Vorstius*, that the Divine Essence is confin'd to Heaven, or any other place: for he acknowledges his Will, by which he acts or operates, to be his very Essence; and only denies that corporeal Extension which *Vorstius* ascribes to him. Chap. 2.

So they who deny God's being any where before the World's Creation, or that he now exists in any place beyond, or out of the World, think of nothing less than denying his Immensity; but intend only, that in the mention'd Cases there being no body with which the Almighty cou'd be present, he cou'd not properly be said to be in any place.

Some dispute whether Error be in the Understanding or the Will; when all agree that in the simple Apprehension or Perception there may be Obscurity and Confusion, but that Error properly so call'd can be in the Judgment only: So that the whole Controversy lies in this, whether the Judgment properly belongs to the Understanding or the Will? as if they were different distinct things, when indeed they are really and intrinsically the same.

He who denies Fire to be hot, means no more than that there is no Quality in Fire it self, like the Sensation it produces in us. And he who says there is no Sense except in the Brain, denies not but the Cause of it may be in any other Member.

But it's impossible for one Man (they are so numerous) to reckon up all the Controversys of

Chap. 2. of this kind. Mathematicks it self, notwithstanding all its care to avoid Ambiguity, is not free from 'em. Cou'd *Clavius* and *Pelletarius* have disputed as they did about an *Angle*, what it was, had they known, or been willing to know, one another's meaning? How vainly does Mr. *Hobbes* cavil against the Definitions of the Mathematicians, not considering that they are only *nominal*, which are arbitrary, and as the Definer pleases? How idle are those Disputes, whether a Point be a part of a Line? or Unity be a Number? And how apt are the Mathematicians to laugh at those who express themselves in other words than what they are us'd to, tho perhaps they are altogether as proper?

I shall conclude this Chapter with this Remark: If they who take such care to avoid verbal Contentions, can't acquit themselves of 'em; what shall we think of those who are so far from endeavouring to prevent 'em in themselves or others, that they do what they can to promote and increase 'em?

C H A P.

C H A P. III.

*The several Kinds of Logomachys.*

**B**Y what has been said, you plainly see how apt Learned Men are to make a great noise about nothing. I now proceed to shew the several kinds of Controversys about Words. Now, sometimes there's no real Difference at all between the Antagonists; at other times there's a small Difference, but not so much as is pretended. Sometimes (tho not so often) one or both of the Combatants quite mistake the Question: but most times, in the heat and confusion of Disputation, they in many particulars depart from it. To give an Instance; In the Controversy concerning the Morality of the Sabbath-Day, some think the dedicating the seventh part of our Time entirely to the immediate Service of God, is our indispensable Duty; by virtue of the fourth Commandment given to the Jews: others reckon it only a prudential Institution of the Church. Now here is, I confess, some difference; but then they run into strange Confusion and Inconsistencys about the words [*of moral Obligation*] sometimes taking it in one sense, then in another, anon in a third: and as soon as ever the dust is rais'd, from disputing they fall to quarrelling and misrepresenting one another; as if one Party held every tittle of the fourth Commandment, and other Precepts relating to the Jewish Sabbath,

to

Chap. 3. to be of perpetual Obligation to us Christians; and as if the other Party were going about to abolish the publick Worship of God.

And yet these Men are agreed, that every thing commanded and forbidden in the fourth Commandment is not of perpetual Obligation; as, e.g. keeping holy the seventh Day, reckoning from the first Day of the Creation: nor a total Abstinence from all sorts of Labour both by Man and Beasts; and other things of a mystical signification. On the other hand, they agree that 'tis our Duty to worship, not only privately, but at set times in publick Assemblies, which ought to be frequent and full, and celebrated with Reverence, Attention, and Zeal: That since the Christian Church consecrates the Return of every seventh Day to the immediate Service of God, as the Jews did, we ought to set aside all worldly Business on that Day, willingly and chearfully to attend on God's Worship; make a due Preparation for it at home, and avoid every thing likely to divert us from it: That for a capable Person to neglect this, is not only a Contempt of the Church, a Disobedience to the Ordinances of Men, but a direct and immediate Affront to God himself; it's a robbing him of those more solemn Acts of Worship, of that Tribute of Praise which is due to him from Christians, even on more accounts than from the Jews.

In all the foremention'd particulars, both Partys agree; but these are confounded with those about which they disagree: And hence arises that sort of Contending about Words which I call *mixt Logomachy*, to distinguish it from a *pure Logomachy*, where the Question is quite mistaken.

To

## *A Discourse of Logomachys.*

33

To give one Instance more: Another Ques- Chap. 37  
tion hotly agitated, is, Whether the Faithful  
who died before our Saviour, obtain'd the  
Forgiveness of their Sins? This at first sight  
one wou'd think a strange Controversy: For  
will any say the Faithful are gone to Hell for  
want of having their Sins forgiven? By no  
means, say they. Well then, are they gone  
to continue in Limbo till the Resurrection?  
This they ridicule. Did they then satisfy for  
their Sins, by being punish'd for 'em in their  
life-time? No such matter. Will they say,  
they went to Purgatory to be cleans'd from  
those Sins for which they cou'd obtain no Re-  
mission? No, they went directly to Heaven,  
the endless State of the Blessed. Two of 'em  
had the honour to be translated thither alive:  
And all this they obtain'd, they say, by Faith  
in Jesus Christ, the Messias who was to come.

Do they then differ in this, that Jesus  
Christ, the only Sacrifice for Sin, not being  
actually offer'd up, their Sins cou'd not be  
actually aton'd for, and were therefore re-  
member'd in the Ceremonys and Sacrifices of  
the Jews, and themselves us'd more hardly  
under the Law than Christians under the Gos-  
pel, and had not so clear Manifestations of  
the Messias and his Benefits, as we have? No,  
in all these, and other things relating to the  
Difference betwixt the Jewish and Christian  
Oeconomy, they are absolutely agreed. In  
what then do they disagree? Why truly, I  
shou'd say this is an Instance of (what I but  
now call'd) a pure Logomachy, did it not  
seem insolent to suppose so many Learned  
Men (as there have been) engag'd in it. I  
shall therefore rather think there may be some  
D difference

Chap. 3. difference between 'em, tho so minute, that  
 such dull Fellows as I can't discern it.

Another Distinction of Contentions about Words, is, this: Some are about one single, or but a few Words; others about a whole System, or the Manner of explaining an Hypothesis. The former sort is soon perceiv'd; e. g. in the Question, Whether the Will can be compel'd, who is so short-sighted, but sees that the difficulty is remov'd if you explain the word *compel'd*? If you mean that the Will may be forc'd to desire a thing which at the same time it loaths, it's a Contradiction in terms; for a Man can't will, and not will the same thing at the same time. But if by compelling the Will, you mean no more than that the Will for fear of an approaching Evil may be contented to allow of that, which when at liberty and free from danger it wou'd by all means abhor and avoid; who is so ignorant, as not to know that the Will is thus compel'd every day? In such Instances as this, the Ambiguity is easily discover'd, and consequently the difficulty more readily remov'd. But when Writers differ about the Explication of an Hypothesis, or Method of a System, Fallacys are not so soon detected.

An eminent Instance of this we have in the famous Controversy which divided almost the whole Body of Philosophers in *Europe* into two Sects, the *Aristotelians* and *Ramists*; and was almost the only Argument for Disputation in all the noted Universitys of *France* and *Germany*. It began at *Paris* on this occasion: *Peter Ramus* had publish'd two Books, in which he finds fault with *Aristotle's* Method of writing in some particulars:

ticulars: One of these he intitles, *Logical Institutions*; the other, *Animadversions on Aristotle*. This was highly resented by some of the University; who, judging if *Aristotle's* Authority was once call'd in question, their own cou'd not be over-secure, chose *Anthony Govean* an eminent Lawyer, for their Champion, began to rage and rail, and stuck at nothing that might serve to run down *Ramus's* Novelty's (as they call'd 'em.) When they found all this wou'd not do, away they tradg puffing and blowing to Parliament, beg 'em by all that was good to forbid the reading of these pernicious Books: Alas, *Hannibal* was at the Gates, and nothing but Death and Destruction at hand! Well, even this was not thought a sufficient Remedy. Nothing would serve, but his most Christian Majesty *Francis I.* must be Judg in this weighty Debate; (and very well worth his while you may be sure 'twas) he submitted to it, and order'd five Persons to hear the Point debated and determin'd according to the Merits of the Cause.

Accordingly *Govean* chose *Peter 'Danesius* and *Francis Vicomercatensis* for his Seconds; *Ramus's* Friends were *J. Quintin* and *John Beaumont*: the King nominated a fifth, to represent his Person and be Arbitrator. After these Gentlemen had trifled away many Days, *Ramus* seeing three of 'em against him, began to distrust his Cause, and wou'd have appeal'd from them to more equitable Judges. But these, having the Staff in their own hands, condemn'd *Ramus*, and made their Report to the King; who immediately approv'd their Sentence, and in a long Proclamation gave



**Chap. 3.** Orders, that for the future *Ramus* shou'd read no more Lectures, and that none shou'd presume to Print, Sell, or any ways Publish his Books under very severe Penaltys. *Aristotle*, you'l say, must needs have the better of it, having not only the Doctors, but King and Parliament his Advocates; and therefore who, for the future, wou'd be so hardy as to dispute his Authority?

But perhaps my Reader listens to hear the Particulars of this great Debate. Well then (but, pray be attentive) *Audomarus Taleus* will inform you presently: *Aristotle*, it seems, in his Books of Logick, had neither given us the Definition nor Division of it. This Omission *Govean's* Heroes made it their first day's Business to justify; which *Ramus's* two Friends thinking against all Sense and Reason, gave it under their hands very judiciously, that we ought to know the controverted Point before we can dispute about it to any good purpose: but this the others thought not fit to allow, and so they broke up without coming to any Conclusion.

The next Day the *Aristotelians*, conscious that they had been unreasonably stiff the day before, began to be a little more pliable, and condescended to the *Ramists* so far, as to allow that Logick ought to be divided into two Parts; the first of which is design'd to help our Invention, the second to direct our Judgment.

This Concession was too advantageous to the *Ramists*, not to be made use of to their Advantage; they therefore insisted, as a necessary Consequence from the Premises, that *Ramus* had justly blam'd *Aristotle*, for making

ing no Distinction where they themselves acknowledged a Difference. This pinch'd the *Aristotelians*, who, in short, finding nothing wou'd help them out but adjourning the Court, put off their Answer till another day. This the *Ramists* thought very hard, but what follow'd was much worse; for when the Day came for the *Aristotelians* to give in their Answer, truly they wou'd not stand by what they had said, but wou'd have the whole Debate begun anew, and all that had been said go for nothing. *Ramus* not bearing such manifest Injustice, appeals to all the World. What Proof had they brought, that his finding fault with *Aristotle* was an undermining the Foundations of Theology, and the other Sciences; such a horrible Interruption, such an unfortunate mischievous Disturbance of their Studys (as the Regent of the University call'd it) a Disease that must have a speedy Remedy, or they were undone; a Plague which requir'd nothing less than the King's Proclamation to warn his loving Subjects from the Infection? Indeed here was no new Opinion, much less Heresy, broach'd. 'Twas only a Dispute whether *Ramus's* or *Aristotle's* Method was to be prefer'd; or rather a great noise about nothing, a mere Logomachy, fit for nothing but to be laugh'd at.

And what are a multitude of Logical Disputations but Logomachys, as those concerning the Number and Order of the Predicaments and Predicables, what Things or Notions do or do not belong to them? In what part of Logick we ought to treat of Topicks, Syllogisms, Sophisms, &c? Of the Necessity of Definitions, and whether the *Genus* may

Chap. 3. be sometimes omitted in them? Whether Dichotomy or Trichotomy be the best way of dividing Things? So likewise those, by which they settle the Division and Subordination of the Sciences, and assign to every one their Objects, that each may be contented with her own share: For Metaphysicks, you must know, takes it very much amiss that Logick shou'd invade her Province; in presuming to discourse of the Whole and its Parts, Cause and Effect, Subject and Adjunct, &c. And Pneumatics is no less disturb'd, that Metaphysicks shou'd pretend, against all the Justice in the World, to invade her Right of considering the Nature of Spirits; and the Wrangles between Pneumatics and Physicks, for the Propriety of talking about Man, are everlasting: So that I wonder a Science call'd Anthropology does not start up in the World, and to part Strife, take the Consideration of Man to it self from them both.

*Seneca* takes notice of this in his Eighty Ninth Epistle, telling us, that some divided Philosophy into two Parts, others into three, others again into five, and yet without any material Difference. And indeed if every thing, worthy to be known, be treated of somewhere with that Brevity, Clearness and Order, as I can easily understand and retain it in my Memory; I matter not a farthing to what Art, Science or Discipline you refer the Consideration of it, or in what particular Method you treat of it. Oh! but say you, I hate Confusion and want of Method; and this Method appears to me the most natural in the World. Right! No body loves Confusion; but then I wou'd rather you shou'd

thou'd observe Method than dispute about it, especially as if it were about a Matter of Life and Death. Give us a Specimen of your Method in the next Book you write, and if it excels, no doubt but you will have Admirers and Followers enough.

But some Philosophers are like Lawyers, who when they have a bad Cause, do what they can to prevent the Trial's coming on, by unreasonable Scruples concerning Preliminaries and Matters of mere Form.


Besides, how starch'd and clumsy does such a superstitious Affectation of a particular Method look? *Gaußenus* was certainly in the right, when he said, that in explaining the Sciences we were not tied up to one single Method, but are left at liberty whether we wou'd, for instance, refer every Thing and Idea in Nature to the ten Categorys of *Archytas*, or to two, *viz.* Substance and Mode; or three if you please, Substance, Mode and Non-Entity; including under this last, external Denominations, Relations, Privations, &c. (and the like in Theology, &c.) the principal thing you aim at being to reduce all Ideas under certain Heads for the help of your Memory; the Capacity and Reach of which being as different in all Persons as the Features of their Faces, must have different Helps, and those too in a different manner.

Another sort of Logomachy is when the Disputants don't differ concerning the thing it self about which they dispute, but can't agree what name to give it: As when two Politicians know very well the Constitution of this or that Government, but one will have it

Chap. 3. call'd a Monarchy, or mixt Monarchy, and t'other a Commonwealth.

Sometimes it is a mere blind Logomachy, neither of them understanding one another nor themselves, differing only in Words, and yet coming to no real Agreement, their Words being only Sound without Sense. Thus *Montaigne's* Friend pretended to dispute with a Man of no small Reputation, yet never offer'd one Argument, but only a parcel of Jargon without Sense or Coherence, stuff'd with Terms of Art; all which the other took for Objections against his Hypothesis, and spent a whole day in gravely consulting t'other's waggish Nonsense. This was done designedly on one hand; but sometimes neither of the Disputants understand that they talk about nothing. Thus when the Schoolmen contend so earnestly about the strange Nature and Power of the *Materia prima*, which is neither Body, nor Spirit, nor this, nor that, nor any other particular thing; yet every thing, and capable of producing every thing: I don't believe either Party know what they talk about; if they do, I must frankly own I don't. The Disputation, I fancy, is like the *Eccho*, which heretofore, in days of Yore, as the Poets tell us, was a bonny, jolly plump Girl, but is now dwindled away into a mere Sound.

No less guilty are they of disputing about Words, who talk of things above the reach of Human Understanding. As also they who will needs have it, that they understand their Adversary's meaning better than he does himself, and fasten a Sense or Meaning on his Words which he disclaims and protests against.

gainst. But more of this when we come to Chap. 4.  
the Causes of Mens contending about Words. 

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C H A P. IV.

*The Greatness of the Evil of Contending  
about Words.*

**I**F any yet think these Contentions about Words not to be of such ill Consequence as to deserve so large a Reproof, and that in speaking of them so copiously, I fall into the Vice I reprehend; I only desire him to consider the Effects of them: and then, I fancy, he'll soon agree with me, that tho' the misunderstanding this or that particular Word or Phrase be no great matter, yet the Schisms they create in the Church; the Factions, Tumults and Seditions they breed in the State; the Damage and Disgrace they bring on Religion and Learning; the Heats they occasion in the Pulpit, the Wranglings at the Bar; the Party-making in the Senate; the Bigotry in Schools, Colleges and Universities, which constantly attend them, are no small matters.

To these we owe the different Sects of Philosophers, and the several Denominations of Christians; who have many times been so exasperated against one another, as if they would have turn'd the World upside down about Letters and Syllables. Councils of Bishops call'd together from all Quarters,  
even

**Chap. 4.** even the remotest Parts of the Empire ; yea Princes, Kings, nay prudent as well as potent Emperors, have not been able to allay the unmanly, unchristian Heats of Churchmen ; but one Party wou'd still charge the other with Impiety, Heresy, Atheism, horrible Blasphemy, and what not ! and then very charitably damn one another to the Pit of Hell : And all this for nothing in the world, but because they misunderstood one another's meaning, as we have already seen in many Instances.

'Tis yet further remarkable, that the more trifling and minute these Controversys are, with the greater Feud and Animosity they are generally carry'd on. To instance in our own unhappy Divisions (for they are too notorious to be conceal'd or excus'd :) How many are there amongst us, who have often offer'd the Right Hand of Fellowship to their Brethren, and have endeavour'd to behave themselves towards them with that Temper and Moderation which Christians ought to have for one another ; who have met with no other Returns from many of them, than to be rejected with Abhorrence and Scorn ; to be represented as more intolerable even than those, whose bloody Principles (Religious I dare not name them) will not permit them, by their good will, to dispute with any milder Arguments than Sword, Fire and Faggot : and to have their Opinions (how harmless soever) misrepresented, and revil'd as worse than the other insupportable Yoke of human Traditions ; than their saucy Domination over Kings, Emperors, Princes, and all the rest of Mankind ; and (to sum up all in

in one) than their tyrannical, barbarous and bloody Inquisition. Chap. 4.

This is, I say, the Treatment they meet with from Gentlemen, who speak much more favourably of reuniting themselves with those whose Doctrines their Fathers abhor'd as Antichristian, whose Worship they abominated as Idolatrous, whose Discipline they condemn'd as the Torment and Snare of truly conscientious Persons; than they do of giving any other Quarter to their Fellow-Protestants than what they can meet with under Censures, Excommunications, Anathemas, Imprisonment, Loss of Goods, &c. And pray, what may be the occasion of this uncharitable, spiteful, unmanly Treatment of our Brethren? Why, truly, not the least Disagreement in any one fundamental Article of our Holy Religion; but (as any one may see who has Eyes, and will be so kind to himself as to make use of them) some few small Differences about things indifferent, or (at most) unnecessary. I don't say all our Controversys are merely verbal: No; we really differ in our Sentiments concerning some Matters, I readily acknowledg. But then I boldly affirm, that most of our Quarrels arise from mere Logomachys, and not from real Differences; and that if the former of these were once remov'd, if we understood one another more perfectly, there might, for any thing I know to the contrary, remain some real Controversys amongst us; but those so few and trivial, as wou'd be more apt to be forgotten than to be brought upon the Stage, in order to worry Peace and Charity out of the World. But perhaps such

Golden



Chap. 4. Golden Times are reserv'd for future Ages ;  
 ~~~~~ wise, learned, and good Men have in vain attempted to introduce them in this.

Never were Controversys manag'd with obstinate *Jews*, impure and sensual *Mahometans*, blaspheming Libertines and Atheists, or profane Scoffers at all Religion, with greater Heat and Quarrelling, than some of the Disputes above-mention'd were in several Universities ; particularly in those of *Holland*, to the no small Joy and Triumph of their Enemies, who scoff'd at them, and made use of their Writings for Common-Places of Reproach, whence they gather'd choice Flowers of *Billingsgate* Rhetorick. 'Tis a common Observation, that when Friends and Neighbours fall out, they are oftentimes more implacable than Strangers and profess'd Enemies : Just so, we much more patiently bear to be contradicted by those, whose Sentiments differ from ours as far as East does from West, than by those who differ from us only in a few insignificant Matters, or perhaps in nothing but the manner of expressing themselves. A notable Instance of this we have in an Author (who calls himself *Ludovicus Montalcus*) the most elegant Writer of the Provincial Letters. When *Jansenius's* Tenets were canvass'd in the University of *Paris*, two Questions were particularly very hotly debated ; the first was, *Whether the Righteous have in themselves an immediate Power of fulfilling the Law ?* The other was, *Whether all Men receive of God Grace sufficient for their Conversion ?* The *Jesuits* affirm'd both, and the *Jansenists* deny'd them. A third Party appear'd, whom they call'd at that time the modern

modern *Thomists*; these talk'd as the *Jesuits* did, tho their Opinions were the same with those of the *Jansenists*. They said with the *Jesuits*, that the Justify'd had an *immediate Power* of fulfilling the Law; but then added, that this Power cou'd not be reduc'd into *Act*, but by the *special* Grace of God: which was just the same which the *Jansenists* meant, by saying, they had not an immediate Power.

Again, these *Thomists* affirm'd with the *Jesuits*, that all Men have Grace sufficient to convert them; but held with the *Jansenists*, that this *sufficient* Grace wou'd never become *effectual*, unless accompany'd with *special* Grace, which was the very Reason why the *Jansenists* wou'd not call it *sufficient*. Were not the *Thomists* then of the *Jansenists* Opinion? No, by no means, but join'd with the *Jesuits*, notwithstanding the real Disagreement of their Sentiments, and persecuted the poor *Jansenists* for not speaking, as well as thinking, just as they did.

To see more of the Nature of these Contentions, 'twill not be amiss to consider what the Great Apostle St. Paul says of both of them, and the Person who promotes them: *He is proud, says he, knowing nothing, but doing about Questions and Strifes of Words, whereof cometh Envy, Strife, Railings, evil Surmings, perverse Disputings of Men of corrupt Minds, and destitute of the Truth, supposing that Gain is Godliness; from such withdraw thy self.* 1 Tim. 6. 4, 5.

In the first place, as soon as the Man withdraws his Assent from, or denies it to *sound Words* (as the Apostle calls Truth in the foregoing Verse) he's seiz'd with a Spirit of

†

Contra-

**Chap. 4.** Contradiction; and this disposes him to dispute, not so much for Truth, as for Victory, or (which with him is all one) for the last Word; and if he can but confound, or even tire his Adversary, with a multitude of Words, be they ever so impertinent, he thinks himself a brave Fellow. And if once he imagines himself to have come off with flying Colours, he disputes with every Man he meets at all Adventures: Nothing shall then be so certain but what he'll question; nothing so clear, but he'll endeavour to perplex; wrangling with Friends and Foes, Consenters and Dissenters: He'll dispute eternally, not only concerning things of moment, but the most trifling things in nature, and oftner about Words than Things. If he can't meet with an Adversary, he'll create one, and make People speak what they never meant, rather than miss an occasion of shewing his Parts in their Confutation. If he meets with his Match, or finds any applauded more than himself, or one who has gotten the knack of Disputing (which he reckons the End and Perfection of Learning) then nothing can be more uneasy: You can't imagine how his little narrow Soul boils with Envy. *Pompey* cou'd have born an Equal, and *Cæsar* a Superior with much more Patience. He summons together all his Forces, lays about him with Might and Main, and therefore pray let every one look to himself.

And one word unwarily express'd, or misunderstood, creating another, he never ceases till his Adversary, quite tir'd with his Impertinence, lays down the Cudgels.

Besides,

Besides, such are the most unfair Adversaries imaginable. The bitterest Invectives and Curses of the Poets; the foulest Language in the Comedians us'd towards Slaves, Whores, Pimps and Parasites; these good-natur'd Gentlemen will not spare to apply to their Opponents. If this be not sufficient then, one is a *Sadducee*, and t'other a *Pharisee*; this a *Pelagian*, that a *Manichee*; you a *Sabellian*, you a *Photinian*; thou a *Nestorian*, and thou an *Eutychian*; and so proceed, like some good-natur'd Women, from Arguing to Scolding, to the end of the Chapter. The Question, we'll suppose, is about a Point of Philosophy: But the Business is to inveigh against one another's Manners, and instead of debating a Point of Doctrine, to reflect upon one another's Familys. The genuine signification of the Word is this, says one, I'll maintain it. Oh, but says t'other, you're a *Dutchman*, or a *Scotchman*. I am very able to prove that this is the best Method for a Philosophical Treatise, says the Opponent. Ay, says the Respondent, but I am misinform'd if you have not had more than one Bastard. The Sense of such a Passage in Scripture is this, says one: But pray, replys t'other, who was it that beat the poor Woman till she miscarry'd? Now I'll appeal to all Mankind, whether this be not profound Reasoning?—*Epiphanius* and *St. Chrysostom* (Men well known) had different Opinions about the Writings of *Origen*: Well, says *Epiphanius* to *Chrysostom*, I hope you may never die a Bishop: And, says *St. Chrysostom*, I pray God you may never set foot in your Country again. Was not this very much to the purpose, think you?

**Chap. 4.** you? They were hearty Prayers, perhaps; but, in my Opinion, poor wretched Arguments. In such Wranglings as these there's Heat enough, I confess, but the Mischief is, it's without Light. The Disputants are, like Children in the Dark, afraid of every thing they meet. They can't read a Page in a suspected Author, without finding some dangerous Error in it; if 'tis not clearly express'd, then he'll have it that the Snake lies in the Grass. And in Books, whose Authors he don't admire, there's hardly a Word but this acute Man can espy some very dangerous Opinion design'd to be advanc'd by it, or some antient Heresy reviv'd. Tell such People, as plainly as you can speak, that every thing that's good and praise-worthy in us is to be ascrib'd to the Grace of God; that notwithstanding this you encourage the Study and Practice of Virtue and Piety as much as any: That you are as far as any from believing, that all things come to pass by Necessity or Fate: That you abhor all Opinions which infer God's being the Author of Sin: That you utterly detest the Doctrine which teaches, that God has decreed to eternal Perdition a great part of Mankind, without respect to any foreseen Sin, but merely of his Almighty Power and absolute Sovereignty; because it pleas'd him so to do. Tell them this a thousand times over, and call God and Man to witness your Innocency, and that you don't see, but absolutely disown any Impiety or Heresy to be the Consequence of your Opinion, the more you talk, the less you'll be believ'd. Speak kindly to them; offer to drop the Controversy, and be reconcil'd to them:

them: Oh, they'll tell you, don't pretend Chap. 4.  
to put your Tricks upon Travellers, we know  
you too well to be wheedl'd.

It's certain, the Nature of Man is of it  
self too unhappily dispos'd to these sorts of  
Wrangling: but, as tho they were not, we  
have our Schools (or Pesthouses I may call  
them) to teach and promote them. The  
Schoolmen, as *Ludovicus Vives* observes, teach  
their Scholars to scold before they can well  
speak: Disputing is the Beginning, Middle,  
and End of all their Studys. Hence it comes  
to pass, that Universitys and Academys are  
turn'd into Fencing-Schools; where the  
Youth, instead of applying themselves to the  
Study of Learning and Piety, are egg'd on  
to quarrel and dispute about Trifles: Trifles  
indeed in themselves, but such as produce  
more fatal Effects than are commonly taken  
notice of, or can easily be imagin'd. For  
Wranglings about them, occasion very often  
not only the Loss of Truth, but destroy the  
very Love of it; as People in some Distem-  
pers who hate their Food and Physick, but can  
digest Trash very heartily. Besides, many of  
these Disputants make their Markets of these  
Controversys. For as long as there are Men  
in the World, who believe him the ablest Di-  
vine who has the strongest Lungs, and take a  
mighty Zeal for a Party, and specious Pre-  
tences to Religion, for Religion it self; there  
will not be wanting Men of bad Principles and  
base Spirits, who will value Learning no far-  
ther than it serves to fill their Purses and hu-  
mour their Pride, by supplying them with  
Riches and popular Applause.

Chap. 4.

One wou'd think enough had been said to convince us of the Malignity and Contagion of this Distemper, which is so Epidemical in the learned World. It's owing to this that young Gentlemen, who shou'd bring with them from the University, Learning, Gravity and Piety into the Church; good Sense, Knowledge and Prudence into the Senate; Equity into the Courts of Justice; Concord into their Familys; Piety towards their Country, and Parents; Love to their Neighbours; Faithfulness to their Friends; Civility and Friendliness to their Countrymen; Forgiveness and Patience towards their Enemys, &c. do bring home hardly any thing else than a perpetual Itch of Disputing where there's no Difference; a Spirit of Contradiction; the Art of finding Heresy in the least Error, or even ill-express'd Word. Their Common-Place-Books are stuff'd with Forms and Methods of Calumny; their Hearts full of Anger, Hatred, and Irreconcilableness; and their Heads with Suspicions, and narrow, low, ill-digested Notions; having foul Mouths, slandering Tongues, threatening Looks, and sharp Pens: I mean sharp to wound their Neighbours Reputation; on other Subjects they are as dull as you can wish them. In the Reign of the School-Divines things were brought to that pass, that Divinity, Philosophy, all the Sciences were in a manner compos'd of eternal Janglings and fruitless Logomachys, which set almost the whole World in a Flame. No wonder then if the Apostle advises us by all means to avoid and withdraw from such, as Inchanters and Poisoners, who neglect the calm

calm and sedate search after Truth; and in-  
stead of indoctrinating the Minds of their  
young Pupils with solid Learning and true  
Piety, do, for selfish base Ends, tincture and  
season their tender Minds with what the  
Apostle so accurately describes to us, and  
so vehemently warns us against. But to pro-  
ceed :

Were these Contentions about Words not  
mischievous in themselves, but merely Tri-  
fles; it deserves to be consider'd, what im-  
portant, yea what necessary things we let  
pass without Consideration, whilst we amuse  
our selves with these. Theology points out  
to us the Way of Salvation, teaching us, that  
it's our indispensable Duty to make conti-  
nual Advances in the Knowledge of God and  
of our selves, in Learning and Wisdom; and  
in Faith, Hope, and Love. And, shall we  
who have so great a Work to do, like Chil-  
dren who are capable of nothing else, squan-  
der away the few precious remaining Mo-  
ments of our Lives, in toying and squabbling  
about Letters and Syllables? 'Tis high time,  
Gentlemen, to begin the Study of true, solid,  
and substantial Wisdom: Delays are dange-  
rous. Enough of Life has been spent in  
wrangling and disputing. Let's at length be-  
gin to live in earnest. Death is at hand: and  
how much better will it then be for us to be  
found doing something, than prating about  
nothing? I have read a Story, which may be  
thought to our purpose: A certain Criminal  
was told of a Well in an unfrequented Place,  
where he might hide himself very safely from  
his Pursuers, till such time as proper Methods

E 2

cou'd





Chap. 4. cou'd be found for his further Security. The

W Fellow goes very orderly; but perceiving the Well in a very decay'd Condition, runs back to his Friends, and very angrily complains, they had abus'd him; that instead of a Well, there were nothing but the Ruins and dry Walls of a Well. What then? said they; We sent you thither not to quench your Thirst, but to hide your Carcase, for which design 'tis a very proper Place, as you must needs know, if you have been there. Still the Fellow wou'd have it, that it had been a Well, but now was none; and therefore they did not well to misinform him. His Friends told him, if he were or were not misinform'd, they were certain he was misemploy'd in spending that Time in disputing and quarrelling, which he ought to use in thinking after means for his Preservation. But the Man, still persisting in his Folly, was by and by apprehended, and *Jack Ketch* put an end to the Controversy.—Enough is said for the intelligent Reader, tho perhaps nothing be enough for the Contentious.

If nothing but Wars and Fighting will serve our Turn, Enemys are not wanting who will find us Work enough, and with whom it's our Duty, and will be our Glory to contend. Let's bend our Forces against that implacable Enemy of Mankind, who makes it his Business to incense us against one another. Let's labour to conquer our selves, subdue our Affections, mortify our Corruptions, which are continually enticing, seducing and transporting us, in contempt of Charity, against our Brethren; making Mole-hills Mountains;  
small

small Faults great ones; and insignificant Chap. 4.  
Errors pernicious Heresys. Let's enter the  
Lists with the secret Underminers and pro-  
fess'd Enemys of Christianity: With those  
who deny the Incarnation of our Blessed  
Lord: With those who wou'd fetter Mens  
Consciences, and propagate their Principles  
with Fire and Sword; justifying their horrid  
Massacres, and glorying in their bloody Cru-  
sadoes. When we are encompass'd with so  
many Enemys, surrounded with so many  
Dangers, have an opportunity in our hands  
of gaining immortal Victorys to our ever-  
lasting Triumph in Glory; *When Babylon as  
yet is not destroy'd*: we agree in nothing but to  
disagree, and to worry one another with  
Noise and Nonsense about Words and Tri-  
fles.

Many wise and learned Men have made sad  
Complaints, that so many Attempts have  
been made in vain to bring the Sciences to  
some Perfection. Some have charg'd this  
Mishap on the Length and Difficulty of the  
Sciences, and the Shortness of Human Life;  
and with *Theophrastus* impeach Nature, for  
giving long Life to Crows and Jack-Daws  
who need it not, and an Inch of Life to Men  
who have so much Business to do in it: Who  
if they had longer Time here, would be in a  
Capacity of perfecting the Sciences, and of  
storing and adorning their Minds with all sorts  
of valuable Learning and Knowledg. But,  
perhaps, with a great deal more Reason we  
may lay the Blame upon those sordid, abject,  
paltry Cares, which enervate and distract our  
Minds; and on those many Thoughts we lavish  
away

Cic. 1. 3.  
Tusc.  
Quest.

Chap. 4. away about the unnecessary vain Contentions  
 which have been the Subject of our Discourse.

Let us hear what *Seneca* says of this matter : “ The Reason that Men do so little

“ consider the things which principally concern ’em, is because their Time is taken  
 “ up with Trifles. *Didymus* the Grammarian  
 “ wrote Four thousand Books: I should think  
 “ it an intolerable Penalty for a Man to be  
 “ oblig’d to read them over. In them he  
 “ inquires, which was *Homer’s* Country?  
 “ Who was *Aeneas’s* real Mother? Whether  
 “ *Anacreon* was chiefly inclin’d to Wine or  
 “ Women? Whether *Sappho* was a common  
 “ Woman? and many other such things,  
 “ worth no man’s remembring. Our Mis-  
 “ fortune is, we complain of the shortness of  
 “ Life, and at the same time forget or neglect,  
 “ at least, to be thrifty of it. Consider  
 “ how much Time is lost in the Infirmitys  
 “ and Anxieties of Sickness; in the Hurry of  
 “ Business, and in Sleep: and you will find  
 “ that the Age of Man is not of Capacity to  
 “ take in all which we call the Liberal Sciences.  
 “ But then, of how many things do the  
 “ Philosophers treat, which serve at the best  
 “ to no other purpose in the World, than to  
 “ amuse us? They have contented themselves  
 “ to talk about Letters and Syllables; to trifle  
 “ with the Grammarians and Mathematicians,  
 “ making even the most insignificant of  
 “ their Speculations part of their Studys.”

So far *Seneca*. But what wou’d our Stoick have said, had he liv’d in the Days of the Schoolmen! when to be a Philosopher was only to be able to dispute; and to dispute was

was nothing but to wrangle about Words, Chap. 4.  
 and many times about Words which neither  
 Adversary understood. Their Pupils were  
 not so much instructed to oppose Truth to  
 Error, as Words to Words; if I may be  
 allow'd to call their barbarous Jargon by that  
 Name. No wonder they made so little Pro-  
 gress in useful Knowledg! No wonder that  
 Philosophy was said to lie at the bottom of  
 a deep Well! That Physicks was so hardly  
 brought to change her old unintelligible Cant  
 of occult Qualitys, its eight I know not  
 what Degrees, &c. for rational Conclusions  
 drawn from accurate judicious Observations,  
 and certain Experiments. In which method,  
 if we proceed with Cheerfulness and Diligence,  
 there's no Reason to despair, but natural  
 Philosophy may yet considerably enlarge the  
 Bounds of her Empire. But, if we had ra-  
 ther stop at the Porch, than enter into the  
 Palace, the Great Lord *Verulam's* Words may  
 not be improper for our Consideration: " I Org. Sci.  
 " don't deny, says that wise Man, but the ent. in  
 " commonly receiv'd Philosophy may still be Praef.  
 " of use to sharpen our Wits, by furnishing  
 " us with Materials for Disputation; to set  
 " off a Discourse, may be convenient for Pro-  
 " fessors, and yield us some considerable Ad-  
 " vantages in our civil Capacity. But then,  
 " we must know that this sort of Learning,  
 " which we had from the *Greeks*, is but as the  
 " Childhood of Knowledg; and has one very  
 " remarkable Quality of Children, it talks  
 " much, but can perform little. It's very apt-  
 " ly represented by the Fable of *Scylla*, who  
 " has a Virgin's Face and Countenance; but her

Chap. 4. “ Womb and lower Parts are encompass’d  
 “ and fill’d with barking Monsters. Thus  
 “ the Sciences, in our Days, at first sight  
 “ appear beautiful and pleasing; and indeed,  
 “ in the general, contain many specious  
 “ Maxims: But, if you descend to Particu-  
 “ lars, if you look into its inmost Parts and  
 “ Recesses, you will find ’em barren, able to  
 “ breed, bring forth and cherish nothing,  
 “ but snarling Disputes instead of substantial  
 “ Knowledg.”

I remember a certain Divine told me, that when in his Youth he began to apply himself to the Study of Philosophy; their Custom was, when they went home, to write down what their Tutors had dictated to ’em in the Schools. His Father seeing him at his Business one day, takes up his Paper, and finds it to contain certain Logical Prolegomena, tedious enough on every Article, but particularly so on the Question concerning the *Genus* of Logick, whether it be an Art or a Science? The old Gentleman, seeing to how little purpose his Son was employ’d, falls into a Passion: Away, says he with these Impertinencys! Go you and learn your Logick, and never trouble your Head, Whether it be an Art or a Science. The same may be said to the majority of Students, who waste not their Childhood only, but their whole Lives in vain Disputes: Go you rather and learn the natural Causes of things, that wrangle about the Genus and Definition of Nature! Go you rather and learn to practise the Virtue of Liberality, than multiply words in disputing, whether Liberality may not have place in

in receiving as well as parting with Mony. Chap. 4.  
The same may be said as to a thousand other things.

There was heretofore a Controversy between the Stoicks and other Philosophers (pray forbear laughing) Whether since Wisdom was allow'd to be a good thing, [*To be wise*] were so also? The Stoicks contended for the former, but wou'd by no means allow that 'twas a good thing *to be wise*; or, if you please, that *to be wise* was a good thing. For what reason, pray! Why you shall have that too, if you are acute enough to apprehend it. To be wise, say they, is incorporeal and a mere Accident, and therefore can effect nothing; consequently can profit nothing, and therefore can't be a good thing: For that which is a good thing, profits; and that which profits, acts; but that which acts, is a Body. (*By Body they meant the same as we do by Substance.*) Now, wou'd not any who were not so subtil, nor so nice Distinguishers as the Stoicks, think with the ignorant Vulgar, that to be wise was as great a Blessing, as to have Wisdom; and that to live happily was as desirable a thing, as a happy Life? *Seneca* himself cou'd not chuse but take notice of this Logomachy: " Pray, Epist. 117.  
" Gentlemen, says he, What's the reason we  
" employ our Thoughts (so necessary for the  
" consideration of greater things, and so justly  
" expected for the contemplation of better  
" things) on those matters which are either,  
" at least probably false, or ridiculously foolish?  
" What am I the wiser, to know  
" whether these words [*Wisdom*] and [*to*  
" be

Chap. 4. " be wise] cause in some Peoples Heads two  
 " different Ideas? or that the former may  
 " be call'd a good thing, but not the latter?  
 " Well, for once I'll take Courage, and put  
 " it to the venture: You shall have Wisdom;  
 " and I'll be contented to be wise——  
 " I beseech you now tell me, Who has the  
 " Advantage?——In earnest, rather than  
 " trifle at this rate, point me out the Way  
 " by which I may arrive at Wisdom, or  
 " become a wise Man. Tell me what I am  
 " to chuse, what to refuse? This is Wisdom,  
 " this is to be wise; But to spend your Time  
 " in Subtilty and Sophistry, I'm sure, is far  
 " otherwise. Fortune has given you so many  
 " important Questions to resolve, that one  
 " wou'd think you shou'd have little time  
 " and less Inclination to quibble! How sot-  
 " tish is it, when the Signal of Battle is given,  
 " to imagine, that flourishing your Sword  
 " will gain you the Victory! No, take my  
 " Word for it, nothing but decisive Arms  
 " and fighting in earnest will serve your  
 " Turn."

Another Mischief of these Disputes is, that  
 when People see very few Questions, but  
 what are debated *pro* and *con*; they are  
 tempted to reckon all things doubtful and  
 uncertain; or, that if there be any Certainty,  
 it lies in Arithmetick and Geometry. For,  
 say they, if there be any Certainty in the  
 other Sciences, Why have Men so vastly dif-  
 ferent and numerous Opinions? Why does  
 the same thing appear to one learned Pro-  
 fessor *true*, to another *false*; to this *evident*,  
 to the other *doubtful* and *obscure*?

To

To these Disputes were undoubtedly ow- Chap. 4.  
ing the different Sects of the *Academicks*,  
*Scepticks* or *Seekers*, who withheld their As-  
sent from all Propositions, under pretence of  
the Intricacy, Perplexity and Incomprehensi-  
bility of Things: and it's too probable, that  
our modern *Libertines*, *Deists*, and *Atheists*  
took occasion, from the scandalous Conten-  
tions of Christians about many things, to  
disbelieve all. Concerning the former, says  
*Seneca*, " 'Tis sad to consider, how many  
" Mischiefs Subtilty has introduc'd amongst Epist. 82.  
" Mankind, and what an Enemy it is to  
" Truth. *Protagoras* says, we may dispute  
" *pro* and *con* on any Subject, with equal  
" Advantage; even on the Question, Whe-  
" ther we may do so, or no? *Nausiphanes*  
" tells us, that all things in Nature do as  
" really not exist, as exist. *Parmenides* af-  
" firms, that there is but \* one Being in the \* As Lip.  
" Universe. *Zeno of Elea* tells us, there is *fius reads*  
" nothing in the World: and much of the it.  
" same mind were the *Scepticks*, *Megarians*,  
" and *Eretrians*, the Followers of *Menedemus*,  
" and the *Academicks* who taught us the  
" strange new Science of Knowing No-  
" thing."

They are mistaken indeed, who from the  
variety of Disputes conclude, that there is no  
Certainty: for, if you narrowly examine 'em,  
you will not find such a vast difference be-  
tween the Partys, as perhaps you ima-  
gin'd. But let the Difference be ever so  
great, 'tis a thousand to one but they agree  
in many more things than those in which  
they disagree. You will find that the reason  
why



Chap. 4. why in the Mathematicks, the Disputes are not so numerous as in the other Sciences, is not, that the Principles of the Mathematicks are more certain in themselves, or that nothing in the other Sciences were capable of Demonstration; but that the Mathematicians, having a Language peculiar to themselves, express themselves in words of a more determin'd Sense, and in whose Signification they are better agreed, than in those us'd by the Vulgar: most of whom have more Meanings than they have Letters, in one of which they are us'd by this Author, in another by a second, and in both by a third; whence necessarily proceed Equivocation, Misunderstanding and Confusion.

Certainly nothing exposes learned Men to Contempt more than these Wranglings; nay sometimes Religion it self, when made the Subject of these Disputes, suffers into the bargain. *John de Secubia* a Spaniard drew up his Treatise of undeclin'd Words, he tells us, for the Use of the Council of *Basil*; principally to determine the Signification of the Particles *From*, *By*, and *But*, or *Except*, which occasion'd so many Disputes between the *Greeks*, and the *Hussites*, and *Bohemians*: The former of these, in my Opinion, were very justly laugh'd at by the *Turkish* Emperor, when they petition'd for leave to go to the Council, where they had no other Business but to dispute, *Whether the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son, or from the Father by the Son?* The *Barbarian* thought it incredible, that Men in their Wits shou'd make

make so much ado about that which appear'd Chap. 4.  
to him of so little moment.

Never were those *Roman* Gladiators, who fought on Horseback blindfold, more heartily laugh'd at, for their ridiculous Traversings, and many insignificant Blows given the Air instead of their Adversary; as our blind Disputers, especially when expos'd, as they have so often been, in our modern Comedys.

*Boccalini*, the witty *Italian*, tells us a comical Story of a tragical Business acted in *Parnassus*. The Grammarians, it seems, cou'd not agree, whether *Consumptum* were to be written with a *p* or without one: Well, from disputing they went to fighting; and what does *Manutius* but hurls a great Stone, with a *Roman* Inscription on it, in which *Consumptum* was written with a *p*, full in the Face of *Lambinus*, and beat his Nose flat. I need not apply the Fable.

And who can forbear laughing to see the Philosopher in the Comedy! (for why mayn't I quote a *French*, as well as a *Greek* or *Latin* Poet?) Wou'd one think a Man cou'd be so angry as he is there represented! How does he revile his Adversary? How does he enlarge upon his Ignorance, as tho he had never learnt his *a*, *b*, *c*? He reckons him amongst the worst of Fools, Buzzards, Blockheads, Idiots, Changelings; and won't give him leave to speak one word in his own Defence. Ask him what Devilish Heresy, Hellish Blasphemy it is, which he thus condemns, abhors, abominates? or, what sacred Truth it is which he maintains, with so much Zeal?

He

*Advices from Parnassus, English Edit. in Fol. p. 97.*

*Moliere's Marriage-Force, Act 1. Scen. 4.*

Chap. 4. He can't tell you presently, by reason of the disorder he is in ; but, have patience till the Man comes to himself, and you shall hear that it's about no such Trifle as perhaps you may imagine, but concerning the very important Question, Whether it be most proper to say the *Fashion* or the *Shape* of a Hat ? Discourse this Man in matters relating to the Conduct of Human Life, he's as far to seek as the greatest Idiot in nature : But ask him, whether Being be a *Genus Univocum* with respect to Substance and Accident ? Whether Logick be an Art or a Science ? Whether its Object be the three Operations of the Mind, or only the third ? Whether there be ten Categorys, or only one ? Whether the Conclusion be of the Essence of a Syllogism ? Whether the End influences us by its real or intentional Essence ? Whether the Essence of Good consists in its Desirableness or Agreeableness ? Whether Good and the final End be reciprocal ? On such Subjects as these he'll talk till Doomsday : Only you must be sure to humour him, and let him in every thing have his own way, and proceed in his own method.

When the Vulgar see such Pedants as these brought upon the Stage under the name and notion of Learned Men, Doctors and Philosophers ; they even please themselves in their own Ignorance, and presently entertain the most contemptible Thoughts in the world of the Liberal Sciences and all sorts of Learning. They take a Scholar and a Fool to be two words differing only in Sound ; and look upon Schools not as places well-provided for the Cure

Cure of Ignorance, but set up for the Bane of Chap. 4.  
good Sense, and the Destruction of Wit; where Boys of good parts degenerate into Pedants, and Pedants into downright Fools.

I don't deny but this Sauciness and Buffoonery of Satyrists and Comedians ought to be discountenanc'd and suppress'd : but I wou'd willingly know, whether they who give them the occasion of using their Pens to no better purpose, ought to be free from Censure. But the Poets are not the only Men who have had a fling at our Disputers; old grave Philosophers have express'd their Dislike of 'em with freedom enough : " We dispute, says *Seneca*, with abundance of Gravity, about the most ridiculous Questions in nature; instead of which, instruct me, I beseech you, how I may attain to the Perfection of Virtue. I don't desire to know whether Fortitude be a living Creature : but put me in mind as often as you please, and convince me by all the Arguments you can think of, that no Creature living can be happy without it, who is not proof against all ill Accidents, and is not prepar'd for the worst of Events."

And yet, after all, I must needs say that the Vulgar have not so much reason to slight and insult the Learned Part of Mankind, as if wrangling about Words were confin'd within the Walls of the Schools and Universitys. Look abroad into the world, and you'll find no place free from it. I shall not instance in some little, pitiful, pedantick *Grecian* Republick : nor in King *Demetrius*, who promis'd three hundred and sixty Bushels of Corn to one who

Chap. 4. who told him of a Barbarism which had accidentally slipt from him, in an Oration, in which he acquainted the People with his Liberality to the *Athenians*. Nor do I insist upon critical *Athens*, which, in a time of Famine, wou'd not accept the Assistance of a Stranger who offer'd to supply them with all Necessarys, because in his Letter he had made use of a Word, which being nicely examin'd, was suppos'd not to be genuine *Greek*. I rather chuse to take old *Rome* for an Example, the Mistress of the World; so glorious for warlike Exploits and Heroick Actions, that one wou'd reasonably suppose they shou'd have been a People the most free of any in the world from trifling about Words. Yet it's very evident, that mere Words had a strange Influence over 'em. The Pride and Tyranny of *Tarquin* made 'em hate more the Name of a King, and the Name of *Tarquin*, than either the Person or Thing. The Letters and Syllables of which those Words consisted, were odious to the *Romans*. These drove *Tarquin Collatine*, the Assertor of their Libertys, and Expeller of their King, from the Consular Dignity into Banishment. These extorted that Oath from the *Romans*, That for the future they wou'd never endure any Mortal to be their King. They shou'd have said, They wou'd never again permit any to be call'd their King. For Domination and Sovereignty went down with 'em very well, as long as it was call'd by another Name. The Consuls, whose Government was so very acceptable to 'em, wanted nothing of the Authority, Dignity, and Power of Kings; only they

- they were chosen every Year. The Dictator Chap. 4  
 cou'd not indeed continue in his Office longer  
 than six months; but then as long as he  
 enjoy'd it, no King in the world cou'd ever  
 be more absolute than he. Did they not bear  
 with the *Decemviri*, tho, all other Offices  
 ceasing, they had an unlimited Regal Author-  
 ity? And what was *Sylla's* and *Cesar's* per-  
 petual Dictatorships? Again, Were not the  
*Triumviri* to all intents and purposes Kings,  
 who shar'd the World between 'em? But  
 this is not all, they submitted to Monarchy  
 under *Octavius*; on condition indeed that he  
 shou'd not call himself *King*, but *Prince*. Sla-  
 very, that bitterest of all Pills, wou'd go  
 down with 'em well enough, so 'twas but  
 gilded over with the Name of Liberty. They  
 suffer'd their Senate to lose all their Author-  
 ity, being satisfy'd well enough that there  
 were some who were honour'd with the Name  
 of Senators. They endur'd the Arbitrary  
 Tyrannical Government of the *Tribunes*; but  
 'twas under the notion of their being Pa-  
 triots, tho they were nothing less. In a  
 word, they put their Necks under the feet  
 not only of Kings, but of Tyrants and Mon-  
 sters; whilst refusing the Title of Kings, they  
 were content with that of Prince, or *Impera-  
 tor* or Emperor. And had (not *Caligula* or  
*Nero*, but) even those excellent Princes *Au-  
 gustus* or *Tiberius* usurp'd that Title, they had  
 arm'd all the World against 'em; had been  
 in the utmost danger of losing Life and Em-  
 pire both together, and of being render'd  
 odious to the latest Posterity: as was *M. Man-  
 lius Capitolinus*, who being condemn'd for en-  
 deavouring

F

Chap. 4. deavoursing to play *Rex*, was thrown off from the *Tarpeian* Rock; and to shew they were not Enemies to his Person only, they pass'd a Law, That none of his Family shou'd ever-after be call'd by his Name. So famous were the *Romans* for their Wars, not only with potent Kings and flourishing States, but even with Letters and Syllables!

You'll be mistaken, if you think the Rabble and meaner Sort of People only were thus superstitious concerning Words and Expressions; the Senators and Nobility were no less. There was a Debate between the *Patricians* and *Plœbeians*, about the latter's being made capable of enjoying the Consular Dignity; which when the former saw they cou'd not handsomly deny, they submitted, if the latter wou'd be satisfy'd with the Power without the Name, and be call'd, not Consuls, but *Tribuni Militum Consulari Potestate*, Colonels or Tribunes vested with Consular Dignity.

The Priests also were as weak in this particular as the People. To give an instance: Before the Expulsion of the *Tarquins*, some holy Rites were perform'd by their Kings, after whose Abdication they thought it necessary that he who solemniz'd those Mysterys shou'd have the same Title: but to prevent all Mischief which might arise, not from the Excess of this Sacerdotal King's Power (for he had none in Civil Affairs) but from his Name, lest that, like a Spell, might raise the Devil amongst 'em; they made him inferiour to the *Pontifex Maximus*, or High-Priest, and by that means kept his Name under the hatches, so that it cou'd not be prejudicial to the Peoples Libertys.

A mighty pother too they made to prevent Chap. 4.  
the hearing any unlucky Noise at the solemnizing of their Religious Rites: Hence those Expressions, *Attend with Silence; Have a care what you say*: Hence their playing with Pipes, lest any Noise shou'd be heard, which might profane the Mysterys of their Religion. Was not here a mighty Concern about Words?

Thus when they were to encounter their Enemys, they took care that the Soldiers shou'd be arm'd not only with Weapons; but Words and certain Names. We are inform'd by *Livy* and others, that when the Consuls call'd over the Names of the Citizens, sitting before the General's Pavilion, or in the *Forum*, they were scrupulously careful that the first employ'd in the Service shou'd have a lucky Name, as *Valerius*, *Salvius*, or *Statorius*. Says *Thrafo*, in the Comedy, to *Sanga*; *What, you Scoundrel! do you bring a Sponge to fight with an Enemy?* So, didn't the *Romans* deserve Rebuke, for imagining the Enemy were to be beaten with Words as well as with Swords?

And are matters mended in our days? Some, when they repeat the Lord's Prayer, will put the Pronoun *Our* after *Father* (because 'tis so plac'd in *Greek* and *Latin*) contrary to the Use of the *European* living Languages. What is Superstition, if this be not?


And what did that Nation get by the bargain, who growing weary of their King, exchange'd him for a Tyrant (more cunning indeed, but not a whit more honest, but much more merciless and arbitrary) who pleas'd 'em with the specious Name of *Protector*!



Chap. 4.

How many are there, who wou'd rather be without an Advantage (be it Riches, Learning, or any other Good) than without the Reputation of possessing it! And many bear Poverty with a great deal of patience, who wou'd be very angry shou'd you call 'em poor Fellows. Many submit to the most abject Services, so they be set off with a pretty *French* Name, or in a Nobleman's Family. Banishment had been much easier to *Ovid*, had he not been insulted with the Name of Exile. And some wou'd endure the most racking Pain, rather than it shou'd be said they had this or the other Distemper, whose Name they don't care to hear mention'd.

That endless Struggle for Titles of Honour and a great Name, what is it but a Contention about Words? The great Ambition of the generality of Mankind, is, not really to be Learned, Wise, Prudent, Pious Persons; but to be so esteem'd. Oh! 'tis a brave thing to be taken notice of, tho it be only by Porters and Carmen. And I'll assure you, in my opinion *Demosthenes* was not a little oblig'd to that poor silly Woman, who wou'd point at him as he walk'd the streets, crying, *That's he; There goes the famous Demosthenes.* Strange! that such a business cou'd make such a Man vain and proud! But so it is; Men are more studious to secure to themselves a Name with their Contemporaries and with Posterity, than a truly substantially blessed and glorious Immortality. Nay, some have attain'd to the Madness of *Erostratus*; they care not whether they be famous or infamous, if their Names, that is, the Syllables by which they

they are distinguish'd from other People, be Chap. 4.  
in every body's mouth. 

The continual pains People take to acquire Riches, that Idol of Mankind, is really not for the Thing, but the Name; not for Riches is self, but the Name of a Rich Man. For what else an old Miser gets with all his hidden Treasures, I can't imagine.

But 'tis deplorable, that not only private Follies and Misfortunes, but publick Mischiefs arise from verbal Contentions. How many Wars have there been about Words! What else are the Titles of Princes? But not to insist upon that, what Rivers of Blood have been spilt, how many flourishing Citys laid level with the ground, how many fruitful Countrys spoil'd and depopulated, for no other reason than to procure one vain, rash, inconsiderate Man the Title of *Great, Bold, or Victorious!* that his Name may be known to Posterity, and be talk'd of in future Ages, no great matter whether with Respect of Detestation. 'Tis enough if he can say with the Poet, — *All of me shall not die, nor to the Grave descend.* — But, pray, Great Sir, with profound Submission, if I may be so bold, what is it of you that shall not die, but be transmitted to Posterity? Why possibly the Letters with which his Name is spelt, written in a flattering History, or on a Marble Tombstone: nothing in the world besides. 'Tis well these Warriors have such knocking Arguments to defend their Practice; otherwise I might perhaps venture to say, that the Causes of many the most bloody and barbarous Wars have been as trifling altogether as the

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petty

Chap. 4. petty ridiculous Wranglings of Pedants and Grammaticasters. But with these Men of War, fewest words are best.

We see then that the Schools are not the only Places infected with this foolish and pernicious Humour of contending about Words. 'Twould be well for the world, if People of Condition would be earnest after its Cure. But here's the mischief; in this, as in most other Infirmitys, we can't discern our own Weakness and Defects. We are soon sensible of the Sickness of the Body, but not of the Mind. The reason is, there is more Vice and Folly in the latter than we are willing to acknowledge. Go to one of these Contenders about Words, and inculcate ever so much that common Saying, *We shou'd not differ about Words, when we are agreed in the Sense of 'em*; and confirm it by ever so many Authoritys, and you would to as good purpose talk to a Stone-Wall. Talk to 'em kindly; Neighbours, perhaps some one Word or other misunderstood, may occasion all this Difference betwixt you: They'll presently think you to be a proud conceited Blockhead, or a stupid Ignoramus; if they happen to be so civil as not to tell you so. And are you indeed so acute a Man, will they say, and we and all our wise and learned Predecessors such Cavillers, who disputed of these matters for many Ages with so much Zeal! Are all our Polemical Writings, which have gain'd us such a Reputation, to be slighted, under the Notion of our being all this while engag'd with our own Shadows? Now this naturally obliges the Reconciler in a new Dispute, to prove the former Disputation a mere Logomachy; which instead

instead of reconciling them, makes himself Chap. 4.  
odious to both: especially if it be in a Religious Controversy; for then the Disputants justify their want of Humanity, by pretending to contend for the Honour of the Deity. What my Lord *Verulam* says truly, That the greatest Bane and Ruin of the Understanding, is a Veneration for useless Notions, and the Consecration of Errors; may be justly apply'd to the Consecration of Logomachys; They never do us more mischief, than when they are pretended to be written for the Honour of God, and Service of our Country.

In this case they who see more clearly than their Neighbours, and are so well assur'd and confident as to own it; generally undergo the Fate of those *Grecian* Philosophers, who for their nearer Approaches to the Knowledge of the Deity, for rejecting the Multiplicity of Gods, and the absurd Superstitions of the Vulgar, were branded as Atheistical and Profane. So they who dare to discover the Logomachys of our hot-headed Disputants, are hated by both contending Partys; by one revil'd as cunning Shifters, Impostors, Deceivers, Corrupters and Betrayers of Youth; by the other represented as Persons of no Zeal, lukewarm and indifferent, as Shufflers, Traitors, Turncoats, Deserters, False Brethren, or Enemies to the Church, Miscreants, Atheists, Villains, and what not?

Thus are Men of Moderation and Temper treated with all the Insolence and Baseness imaginable: and they are the only conscientious Persons, and zealous for the Church, who agree with their Adversarys in nothing,

**Chap. 4.** but damn all their Opinions, right or wrong, as monstrous Heresys, or at least leading to Schism or gross Impiety; detest all Toleration, Moderation, Comprehension, mutual Forbearance and Charity, as an Agreement of Christ with *Belial*, and a Confederacy with the Powers of Darkness. These things are pleasing to the People, who find it much more agreeable to hear a Preacher misrepresent and abuse Persons of another Sect or Opinion, than to point or strike at their own Vices. He who can but lustily slander and revile People of a different Persuasion, shall with his Followers be an Orthodox Man, I'll warrant him; and tho he has got one Virtue nor good Quality in him, no man with his schismatical Adherents (for such they are, let 'em be of what Party they will) shall be more countenanc'd, encourag'd, and applauded.

The Increase of these Logomachys is often owing to Endeavours to prevent 'em. For many, when they are brought to see that there's little or no difference between their admir'd Authors and their Adversarys, rather than the former shou'd lie under the Imputation of contending merely about Words, will fix quite another strange Sense upon their words, than the Authors themselves ever intended or thought of.

*Epicurus* affirm'd our chief and highest Good to consist in Pleasure. What he meant by this Assertion, we can't better understand than by his own very words, as they are reported by *Diogenes Laertius*, Lib. 10. "It's a plain case, says he, that when we make  
"Plea-

“ Pleasure to be the great essential Ingredient Chap. 4.  
 “ of a happy Life, we do not understand the  
 “ Pleasures of the Luxurious and Leud; nor  
 “ indeed any Pleasures, consider’d only as  
 “ terminated in the Gratification and Satisfac-  
 “ tion of the Senses, as some ignorant ill-  
 “ affected Cavillers misunderstand and mis-  
 “ interpret our Meaning. But by the Plea-  
 “ sure wherein we conclude a happy Life  
 “ consists, we mean no other than that of a  
 “ healthy Body, and an undisturb’d Mind :  
 “ since neither the greatest Delicacys nor dain-  
 “ ty Dishes, neither the richest Wines nor  
 “ the most beautiful and charming Women—  
 “ can make your Lives pleasant; no, no-  
 “ thing but a rational Enjoyment of your  
 “ selves in Sobriety, Temperance, and a hap-  
 “ py Freedom from troublous Passions.”

Now what great Impiety is there in this ?  
 Yet has *Epicurus* been treated as one unde-  
 serving the Name of a Philosopher : and  
 the very word *Pleasure* has been generally  
 taken in an ill sense for his sake. People who  
 govern their Opinions merely on the Report  
 of others, have all along believ’d that *Epicu-  
 rus*, tho a wise Man in many respects, plac’d  
 the greatest Happiness of human Life in a  
 continu’d Round of Sensuality, Luxury, and  
 Leudness. This System of Bestiality, some,  
 who found it sutable to their vicious Inclina-  
 tions, have maintain’d; fondly believing  
 themselves shelter’d and patroniz’d by the  
 Example and Authority of so great a Philo-  
 sopher. Hence *Horace’s* *Swine* out of *Epicu-  
 rus’s* *Say*; and the Names of *Doting Doctors*  
*of mad Philosophy*; the laudable *Inventors* and  
*Encou-*

Chap. 4. *Encouragers of Brutish Pleasures*, and the like. Hence also sprang the infamous Sect of the *Epicureans*; who, I confess, don't differ in Words only, but indeed as far as East from West, not only from other Philosophers, but from *Epicurus* himself, than whom none were more temperate and modest \*.

Many grievous Controversys often arise from one unapt or incongruous Word or Expression. This shall be presently taken notice of by the Antagonist, and wrested to the worst Sense possible, you may assure your self: and then, no doubt, the Inferences will be very heinous. Now, what does the other in this case? Truly he's asham'd to own the Impropriety of his Expression; therefore it must be defended right, or wrong: till from improper speaking, he runs into false Doctrine; and rather than be thought to have utter'd indefensible Words, will maintain unjustifiable Opinions, of which before perhaps he never had one thought. For many are so cross-grain'd, that they hate to have the same Sentiments in common with their Antagonists; whom they look upon not as Opponents, but Enemys. So that when in Judgment they are found to agree very well, in Affection they will differ everlastingly. Tho I must needs say, it shall be very hard but they will find out something or other in

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\* If any are willing to have a more exact Character of *Epicurus* and his Doctrine, in a little room; let 'em consult the Learned Gataker's *Præloquium* to *M. Antoninus the Emperor*.

their

their Adversarys Tenets to find fault with, Chap. 4.  
notwithstanding it shou'd happen, that by so  
doing they contradict not only the rest of  
Mankind, but even their own formerly a-  
vow'd and darling Sentiments. Thus do  
Controversys increase from Nothing to Some-  
thing, from Appearances to Realitys, and  
from Trifles to Nufances both in Church and  
State.

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**C H A P.**



## C H A P. V.

*Of the Causes of Contending about Words,  
which are owing to the Languages.*

**O**UR Observations hitherto of the Frequency and mischievous Nature of *Contending about Words*, have, I hope, been no less satisfactory, than they were obvious and easy. The Consideration of its Causes, seems a more difficult Task. Here we shall have occasion for our Philosophy; not so much of turning over Books, as of considering Men, and of prying and searching diligently into the inmost and hidden Recesses of their Minds. So that if in any respect we fall short in our Enquirys, we more easily hope for the Reader's Candor.

All the Causes of *Contending about Words* may, I think, be reduc'd to two Heads: The Fault is either in the *Languages* us'd by the Disputants, or in the *Disputants* themselves. Of which in their Order.

If there be any Disagreement between separate Spirits, it's real, not apparent and seeming only; a Difference in Opinion and Sense, and not in Words or Sounds. The reason is, they don't communicate their Thoughts to one another by Words, but either by the sole Motions of their Wills, or some other secret way of Thinking to us unknown. But the Souls of Men, in our present State, have no

*immo-*

*immediate* Converse or Correspondence with Chap. 5.  
one another, but communicate their Thoughts by the intervention and mediation of the Body; especially by means of Sounds form'd by different Motions of the Air in the Mouth: Which Signs being in a great measure arbitrary, are consequently obscure, fallacious and uncertain. So that we often almost necessarily contend, not because we have different Sentiments from one another, but because we can't clearly express 'em to one another.

There's no Language but what has many Words, each of which signifies divers things: (the same is necessarily to be understood of Sentences and intire Discourses.) Whence it happens that we often understand the Words of those with whom we dispute, in a different, sometimes in a contrary Sense from what they intended. To dissent from another, is to think otherwise of the same thing than he does. Now, when the same Word is made to signify different Ideas, it comes to pass that we seem to disagree in our Judgments about one particular thing, when in reality we only have different Thoughts concerning different things signify'd by the same Name.

Some there are who approve, yea commend the Exercise of Dancing; others detest and abominate it. What's the reason of this Difference? Why, they are not talking of the same thing. One by Dancing means immodest wanton Gestures of the Body, tending to corrupt and debauch young Persons, as being Incentives to Leudness: The other understands by it a hardy Exercise of Body, design'd

Chap. 5. design'd to promote its Agility, Health and Vigour. What wonder is it if in this Case Persons disagree ?

The Ambiguity of Words is very obvious : What an inexhausted Fountain of verbal Contentions they are, is not so easy to conceive ; equivocal Words and dubious Expressions being without number, and beyond comprehension. The *Hebrews* make the same word to signify not only different, but contrary things. Look but into Lexicons, Concordances, and Indexes of Books, and you'll soon find that almost all Forms of speaking, Nouns, Verbs, yea Particles of Speech, signify differently, in divers Authors perhaps : Yes, in the very same, and in the same Page. Of these the most remarkable are taken notice of by every attentive Reader ; but the more small, subtile and minute are overlook'd, or disregarded. So that I can't see that *Chrysippus* the Stoick talk'd much without Book, when he said, there was no Word but what was ambiguous, and had a doubtful uncertain meaning. *Diodorus Cronus* indeed opposes him, and says no Word is ambiguous : But his Reasons for it are the merest trifling about Words you can meet with, as you may see if you consult *A. Gellius*, *Noct. Attica*, lib. 11. cap. 12. *Chrysippus* publish'd his Opinion in his Books of *Ambiguity*s, mention'd by *Diogenes Laertius*, lib. 7. which will not look so much like a Paradox to those who observe what an almost infinite multitude of Conceptions or Ideas there are in mens Minds, and how comparatively few words we have to express them by. We must note farther, that in order to

a Word's not being equivocally us'd by one Chap. 5.  
or divers Authors, it's not sufficient that it  
take in one, or many, or the greatest part of  
the Branches of the Idea for which it stands,  
but it must comprehend all. If the minutest  
Tittle be added to, or taken from its Signifi-  
cation, 'twill create a Difference in the Idea;  
whence will unavoidably follow a Diversity  
of Judgment. To give an Instance: By a  
Tree, I mean a Body existing by it self, ex-  
tended, living and growing by a due recep-  
tion of Nutriment; consisting of a Root,  
Trunk, Branches, Boughs and Leaves. Now,  
if any takes from this Idea the Conception  
of Leaves, or adds to it that of Fruit, tho  
in all other matters he agree with me; yet  
we may talk from *June* to *January* before we  
intirely agree concerning the Propertys of this  
Object of our Thoughts.

Another thing to be consider'd is, That  
Words came to be made use of by Men as  
Signs of their Ideas; not *naturally*, but by  
*voluntary Imposition and tacit Consent*; and was  
rather the Effect of Chance, than of Coun-  
sel and Design: So that there's no natural  
Connexion between certain articulate Sounds,  
and the Ideas which they represent and sig-  
nify. Now it's incredible that all, who use  
the same Language, shou'd so exactly agree in  
the signification of these arbitrary Signs, as  
to have the very same Idea always repre-  
sented in its full Latitude, without Increase,  
Diminution or Alteration, by the same word.  
It's rather to be admir'd that we agree in the  
signification of so many Words as we do;  
especially considering that we can't so much

**Chap. 5.** as testify our Agreement without the use of Words, which are also of an uncertain signification.

Another Inconvenience is, that we many times know better what we understand by this or the other Word, than we are able in Words clearly to express. This often happens even to the most Eloquent, especially when they are speaking of the numerous, and almost imperceptible variety of our Thoughts, and universally of those things which we don't so much distinguish by a clear Idea, as by Sense, and the immediate Apprehension and Consciousness of our Minds. I very well know, for instance, what it is to have a clear Idea of this or that; and clearly perceive and am conscious of the Light and Instruction my Mind receives from such an Idea. But when I come to describe this Operation or Condition (or what you please to call it) of the Mind to another, I must confess I am at a loss. I am very conscious too when my Mind *wills* this or that desirable Good; but what it is to *will*, I cannot so readily explain. I find my self very differently affected when I taste any thing that's sweet, from what I am when I eat that which is sour or bitter. I confound not their Ideas in my Mind; but to describe their Difference in Words, I cannot find so easy a Task. The same may be said of a beautiful Face; the Regularity, Proportion and Symmetry of Buildings; the Comeliness of Gesture, the Gracefulness of Speech and Action, the exquisite Curiosity of Pictures, the Antiquity of Writings and ancient Monuments, the Diversity of Sounds, the

the melodious Harmony of Music, Vocal and Chap. 5.  
Instrumental, and the difference of Stile.

Many have a true and very accurate Judgment in these Matters; who yet can hardly render an intelligible Reason to another why they judg thus, and not otherwise. The Reason is, they don't form a Judgment by any set Rules, Principles or Maxims; but by an inward Feeling and Perception of their Minds. This makes us differently affected at the sight of a beautiful Damsel, and a homely Dowdy; of a Gentleman, and a Clown; with the hearing of Harmony and Discord, and with the reading of *Cicero's* Epistles and *Plancus's*. So I have seen Antiquarys very nicely distinguish true Medals and antient Coins, from those which were counterfeit, who cou'd prescribe no Rules for doing this either for themselves or others. They have a certain Taste or Relish of Antiquity acquir'd by Use and Custom, by means of which they are always differently affected, they can't easily tell you how, at the sight of a truly antient Coin, and one that's not so, but supposititious or modern.

Hence it is, that when we read the antient Rhetoricians and Orators, we don't always fully comprehend their Meaning. *Cicero* distinguishes the vehement and earnest Stile of *Demosthenes*, from the sweet, gentle, and flowing manner of speaking, in which *Theophrastus*, and *Demetrius Phalareus* excell'd. Now he who has not the same nice Taste as *Cicero* had, may read his Words without being much the wiser. The same may be said, when speaking of the Action of an Orator,

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Chap. 5. he represents it as *admirable, full of Spirit and Vigour, full of Truth, and without Affectation, full of Grief*: As also when the Author of the Books to *Herennius*, distinguishes Orations into the *Magnificent, Middling, and Mean*; or when *Longinus* disputes of the *Sublime*, and *Hermogenes* of his Ideas.

All Words, denoting our Sensations of Impressions from outward Objects, are very equivocal and ambiguous: One, for instance, says Honey is sweet; the other denys it, and says it's bitter. Here is now a real Disagreement, if by *Sweet* and *Bitter* they both mean alike. Yet who knows but the same Object may in two Persons cause different Sensations? The word *Sweet* is ambiguous: Every one understands by it that which is grateful and pleasant to his own Palate. State the Controversy aright, and reduce it to these two Propositions: The Taste of Honey is grateful to *Peter*, the Taste of Honey is unpleasant to *Paul*; and the Controversy will be at an end, and so wou'd many more: there being multitudes in which there is no greater Opposition than in this, which notwithstanding have been carry'd on with much Bitterness and Animosity.

We said above, that even eloquent Persons were *sometimes* at a loss to deliver their Thoughts in clear and proper Expressions; the Vulgar are so almost always. There's no body so ignorant, as not to know a Globe from a Cylinder, or other Figure; but ask a Plowman to tell you what a Globe is, and you'll make him stare upon you. He knows it when he sees it, but can't define it; and yet

yet by such Men as these, and not by Philo- Chap. 5.  
sophers, were our Languages invented : No  
wonder then there was so little Accuracy ob-  
serv'd in adjusting the signification of parti-  
cular Words.

But, besides those Words which signify  
sometimes one thing, and sometimes another,  
there are others which are made to compre-  
hend in their signification things of a differ-  
ent, yea oftentimes of an opposite nature,  
every time they are made use of. To give a  
few Instances out of many : By the word  
*Sense* are signify'd to us things of as different  
a nature as may be. We understand by it  
vulgarly and generally both the Parts and  
Motions of the Body, and the Facultys and  
Thoughts of the Soul ; and confound these  
in our Thoughts, as if there were no differ-  
ence between them, and they were the very  
self-same thing.

The same may be said of the various kinds  
of Sensations, Affections, active and passive  
Qualitys, as they are call'd. The names of all,  
or the greatest part of them, stand for as con-  
trary Ideas as those of Body and Spirit.  
The word *Spirit* is of this number. These  
properly signify *Wind* or a *Breath*, but are  
now generally us'd to signify to us a think-  
ing Substance ; because, no doubt, they  
thought more subtle than Matter, such as *Air*,  
to be more a-kin to a thinking Substance  
than Matter, which is more thick, gross, dull  
and lumpish. Thus we confound the Idea of  
a thinking Substance with a Blast of Air, or  
Fire of some such material Substance ; which  
being, as we apprehend, the Matter dispers'd



**Chap. 5.** thro the whole Body, at the same time understands and wills, separates the Excrements from the Food, prepares the Blood, and diffuses it throughout all the Members of the Body; warms the Heart, moves the Lungs, causes the Pulse of the Arterys, the Motion of all the Limbs and Members of the Body, and what not?

Figurative Words and Expressions are seldom us'd by Disputants, without occasioning verbal Contentions. If you deny Brutes to have Sense, some People wou'd immediately take it for granted, that you deprive them not only of all Thought, but of all the Motions and Affections of Body, and the Use of their Members; in a word, of every thing which they comprehend in their inconsistent, self-repugnant Notion of Sense. If such will fight with shadows, who can help it?

I remember heretofore I was guilty of this trifling about Words in the following Instance. I judg'd the End, or Bounds, or Limits of a Body to be a mere Negation, and not the Existence of the extreme or outermost Extension of a Body. Notwithstanding the contrary Sentiments of many eminent Philosophers, I, like the rest of the World, was very stiff in my Opinion, believing nothing to be more evident. At length, upon cooler Thoughts, I found 'twas a mere Logomachy.

The word *End* was us'd by my Antagonists in a more large and comprehensive sense than 'twas by me; I meant no more by it than the Extremity of the Parts of a Body: They, besides this, meant the extreme Parts themselves,

themselves, at least the outward Surface. Chap. 3.  
Others added to this the Figure made by the different Position and Situation of the Parts; so that, in their Sense, the End of a Body is more than a mere Negation: I grant, in mine it's so, and no more.

To this purpose speaks the excellent Lord Bacon; "Things, says he, having their Names given them by the Vulgar, are presented to us, and distinguish'd from one another by those Names, according to their Conceptions and Apprehensions; so that when a more accurate Understanding, or more diligent Observation, brings Things into a clearer Light, without great Caution, Words will interpose and obscure them, and give us a great deal of Trouble in our Enquirys after the Truth. In this case Definitions, consisting likewise of Words, don't do us all the Kindness we might reasonably desire. And tho indeed we may think we are Masters of our Words, and 'tis easy to say we ought to speak with the Vulgar, and think with the Wise; yet still the Delusions and Legerdemain of Words will seduce and mislead us: They will incumber and intangle the Understanding; and (unless we be very careful) retort upon it those Prejudices and false Notions, which at first were imprinted on it by their means."

To proceed; verbal Contentions are not caus'd only by one Word's signifying many things, but by many Words being us'd to signify the same thing, or by the same things being call'd by different Names. People may

Chap. 5. have a different way of expressing themselves, who have the same Sentiments and Opinions; different Words having many times the same signification. Tho' we want a multitude of Words to express all our Ideas, we have yet many Words to express the same Idea. Nor is this strange, if we consider, that a Nation is compos'd of Citys; these of Familys, every one of which don't fail to bring the Words and Expressions, peculiar to themselves before their Confederacy and Union, into the Language common to them all. This must needs create Variety, which is increas'd also by Travel, Commerce, by Chance, and the Love of Novelty, and the irksom Tedioufness of repeating the same Words every time we are upon the same Subject. Besides, there's no Artificer, nor Tradesman, but what has Words peculiar to their Craft and Profession; not always of Necessity, but Vanity: like our Huntsmen, who value themselves at no small rate, when they have once attain'd to that noble Accomplishment of theirs, the ingenious Art of speaking *Dog-Language*.

So that there is no City, nay scarce a Country Town, Village, or indeed Family, which has not Words or Phrases peculiar to themselves. And every one takes a liberty, when one Word does not presently occur, to use another of the same signification. Eminent Persons are imitated in their particular manner of expressing themselves, especially Princes and Great Men; Hence springs the vast Difference betwixt the Language of the Court and Country; the great  
Choice

Choice and Changes of Words, the reviving Chap. 5.  
those which have been for a long time obsolete, the disusing the modern, and the coining of new ones. Hence necessarily arises Plenty of synonymous Expressions, which Orators, Rhetoricians and Poets have done what they can to increase; so that having a multitude of Words of the same signification, they may beautify their Style with variety of Expressions, and not tire their Auditors, by always leading them in the same dull Road.

With those Words which are of the same signification, we often confound those which are not. The Antients, *Lipſius* tells us, distinguish'd *Cassis* from *Galea*; the former signifying an Helmet made of a Plate of Iron, or some such Metal; the latter of the Hide of a Beast: So *Clypeus* signify'd a round Buckler, *Scutum* an oblong one. But how often did both the Antients and Moderns use these Words exactly in the same signification, tho they had distinct Notions of the Things signify'd by those Words? Logicians indeed distinguish betwixt *Science*, *Opinion*, and *Faith*; but the Vulgar, many of them, use these Words in the same sense. *Agellius* tells us, that *Præda* signifies the Things or Goods themselves taken from the Enemy; and that by *Manubia*, we are to understand the Money for which they were sold. But *Nonius* tells us another Story, and *Asconius* explains the Words differently from them both; and some made no manner of distinction between them, but us'd them exactly in the same sense, as *Agellius* himself confesses. Sometimes Men

Chap. 5. don't stand nicely to distinguish, what, at o-  
 ther times they do. Cicero was too thoroughly  
 acquainted with all the Subtletys of the  
 Stoicks and Peripateticks, not to know the  
 difference between a *Definition* and a *Division*.  
 Yet *Celsus Calpurnius*, by a small Misrepre-  
 sentation of his Words, has had the confi-  
 dence to reproach him on this account, in his  
 2d. Diff. on *Lib. 1. Officiorum*. Cicero vult  
 - The Truth of the Matter is, when two  
 Words signify things of a nature, tho' not  
 the very same, yet very much akin or alike;  
 the minute and trivial Differences in their  
 signification, tho' known well enough and ob-  
 serv'd in their Minds, are not always taken  
 notice of in the Books of Writers, very re-  
 markable for Purity, Exactness and Accu-  
 racy. The Philosophers (comprehending under  
 that name Divines, Lawyers and Physicians)  
 having endeavour'd to redress the Grievances  
 we labour under by reason of these Defects  
 in the Languages, have introduc'd a mighty  
 Change and Alteration into them: For when  
 they observ'd more to be contain'd in the  
 adequate Idea of those things, which were  
 the Objects of their Contemplation, than the  
 Vulgar heeded, or ever took the least notice  
 of; and distinguish'd many things, which  
 were confounded in the Minds of the com-  
 mon People, to whom we ordinarily owe the  
 Languages; they were compell'd to coin ma-  
 ny new Words, to alter the signification of  
 those which were ready made to their hands,  
 made some to signify in a more enlarg'd, o-  
 thers in a more narrow confin'd Sense than  
 they

they did before; determin'd the Sense of Chap. 5.  
some, and distinguish'd others. So that the  
Language of the Learned, and that of the  
common People became very different; that  
of the former being hardly intelligible to the  
latter; and this was another occasion of ma-  
ny Contentions about Words. Many are re-  
prehended, as disputing against the Princi-  
ples of a Science, for no other Reason than  
because he is not thorowly instructed in the  
Language and Terms of Art us'd by its Pro-  
fessors.

It's reckon'd a greater Accomplishment to  
know what Philosophers have said, than what  
wise Men have thought, and do still think:  
And many People are look'd upon with con-  
tempt by the Philosophers, not for having  
Opinions different from theirs, but for not  
expressing themselves according to Art; when  
not one Sect of Philosophers can agree with  
another in the choice of those Terms of Art;  
about which they make so much ado. Nay,  
Philosophers of the same Sect can hardly  
sometimes rightly hit one another's Sense:  
For they don't, like the Mathematicians, tell  
us in what determinate Sense they use this  
or the other Word, by exact Definitions;  
and perhaps shou'd they attempt it, their De-  
finitions wou'd want new Descriptions. This  
is not all; it often happens that the same  
Philosopher uses the same Word sometimes  
in a philosophical, at other times in the vul-  
gar Sense. Hence arise perpetual Logomachys  
between the common People and Philosophers,  
between Philosophers of different Sects, and  
not seldom of the same.

*George*

Chap. 5. *George Calixtus*, in his Judgment concerning the Controversys between the *Lutherans* and *Reform'd*, speaking of those verbal Altercations which have their rise from Philosophical and Theological Terms and Expressions, says, "It's an easy matter to misunderstand and misapply them, since the Sciences are taught after a new Method, that of *Ramus*, who has partly laid aside those Terms of Art; and those which he has still retain'd, are otherwise understood than they were by the Antients: so that the generality of People understand them not at all, or in an unusual and repugnant Sense." I shall conclude this Chapter with the words of *Stephen Gausson*, in *Dissert. de Nat. Theol. Aristote*, says he, divides the Causes into the Material, Formal, Efficient and Final; and the Efficient Cause into the Procatartick, Proegumenick, and Instrumental. Very well for the Divines! But, alas, for the poor Distinctions! they have been sufficiently tortur'd, and drag'd head and shoulders into every Page of the System, whether the Matter requir'd, or indeed wou'd bear it, or no: So that by these their laudable Endeavours, instead of one Controversy, we had presently six or seven, which had never been thought of but for these Distinctions. These have brought Wrangling and Contention into fashion; and for any thing I can see, they are like to continue so."

## C H A P. VI.

*The Faults of the Disputants, and first of those who express their Sentiments in obscure Expressions.*

**H**OW far the Defects of Languages have occasion'd Contentions about Words, has been already consider'd ; how far the Disputants themselves have contributed to them, we come now to examine; and they are, we shall find, Respondent and Opponent both to blame: One for not proposing his Opinion clearly, and the other for not taking it right. The former, of whom we shall treat in this Chapter, is too often guilty of obscure Words, and intricate Expressions.

This in some is an affected Fault; in others, and those very great Genius's, it's perfectly involuntary; they can't express themselves clearly: They themselves readily and easily apprehending other Authors dark Writings, are too apt to think that other Readers can do the like; or take it for granted there's no Obscurity in the matter, because they can find none. I wish such wou'd take more notice of *Quintilian's* excellent Precept: He charges his Orator to make it his great care, *not that his Auditors may understand him, but* L. 8. c. 2. *that they mayn't possibly mistake him.*

Some



Chap. 6, Some think, if they themselves understand their own meaning, that of consequence others must also; and therefore sometimes leave out some Word or Explication, without which the rest is unintelligible; not considering that tho the Author himself can easily supply the Defect in his own Mind, yet his Readers are not all Conjurors. Others are of Opinion truly, that their Readers are altogether as attentive at the perusal of their Writings, as they themselves were at the composing them: But this is a Conceit springing only from Self-Love, and a fond Belief, that others think as highly of us and our Performances as we our selves do. Sometimes the Words are ill-plac'd, and the Method confus'd, which must needs cause Obscurity; nothing preserving the Perspicuity of a Discourse, more than duly observing Regularity and Order. This we often fail of, by not being enough attentive, and by suffering our Thoughts to ramble too far from the Subject we were upon. Sometimes, especially in publick Disputations, we make too much haste, and begin a Sentence before we have well consider'd how to make an end of it: The Heat our Mind is in, destroys its Light, and hinders it from perceiving the proper Order in which it ought to range its Thoughts and Words; and Confusion in the one necessarily breeds Confusion in the other. *Des Cartes* was not altogether in the wrong, when he said, " That the great Qualification requisite for an Orator, next to his excelling in Judgment, was an Ability on all occasions to dispose his Thoughts in so easy and natural

“ \* Method, that every one might without Chap. 6.  
 “ difficulty clearly and distinctly understand  
 “ his meaning.” I had rather this Philoso-  
 pher had made this the Qualification of a  
 Doctor, or Teacher, than of an Orator.  
 For many times an abrupt Sentence, whose  
 Parts are immethodical and almost incoherent,  
 move the Passions, and persuade more forc-  
 ibly than a regular well-turn’d Period; witness  
 that Line of *Virgil* spoken by *Nisus*,

*Me, me; I’m here, who did it: kill me then.*

Sometimes the Obscurity we find in Books,  
 is plainly the Effect of the Dimness of the  
 Authors Understanding; who oftentimes,  
 by endeavouring to outdo themselves, think  
 confusedly, and talk unintelligibly; and by  
 striving to raise their Thoughts a little higher  
 than ordinary, many times perfectly lose sight  
 of them. We often complain we have not  
 Words to explain our Thoughts, before we  
 have well consider’d the Matter; for as *Ho-*  
*race* says,

*We can’t well miss of Words to explicate  
 Things we well understand——*

De Arte  
 Poetica.

And there are some in the World, and not  
 a few, who talk at random they know not  
 what; either babbling about *Chimera’s*, or  
 prating about things beyond the stretch of  
 Human Understanding: and if these can be  
 understood, it’s strange to me. Many of this  
 sort of Gentlemen you may find amongst our  
 Disputants, who reckon it a piece of Honour  
 to

Chap. 6. to stand their ground, right or wrong. The Respondent truly is to defend his Thesis: but perhaps it's indefensible. That's nothing; he must defend it. But he has not one suitable word left to urge in its defence: All this won't excuse him, he thinks; he must hold on, if it be from *June* to *January*, till his Opponent be so civil to him, or so merciful to himself, as to be silent. If for the present he has lost the use of his Understanding, his Adversary shall know he has not lost the use of his Tongue. 'Tis the very same Case with the Opponent: Tho he be ever so well satisfy'd of the Truth of what he opposes, he must not presently lay down the Cudgel. No, that's dishonourable for a Man of his Parts. He must talk on, tho he has not one word to offer that so much as looks like a tolerable Reason for his Dissent. And,

Some of our Learned Gentlemen, even when they are engag'd in these Disputes, will gravely and formally deliver sublime Nonsense, unintelligible Cant, senseless Jargon, merely to stun their Hearers or Readers; and to possess 'em with a conceit, how much these great Doctors understand more than they, poor Souls! do. These Dons are not of *Crassus's* mind in *Cicero*, who says, " That the Orator who talks about what he  
" does not well understand, can make a Dis-  
" course fit for nothing but to be laugh'd  
" at. For, says he, what can be more like  
" Frenzy, Dotage, or Distraction, than to  
" pretend to impose upon People with a  
" parcel of fine words, indeed, taken apart;  
" but which, when put together, have nei-  
" ther Sense nor Meaning?

Our

Our Learned Philosophers have in all Ages Chap. 6.  
 (I am not so well read as to tell you by what Patent) enjoy'd the Liberty of nonsensical—  
 no, unintelligible Words, to conceal their  
 Meaning perhaps; or to speak a bold word  
 for once, to make themselves seem to say  
 something, when indeed they say nothing.  
 Ask a Philosopher the reason why the Load-  
 stone attracts Iron? 'Twould be unseemly  
 and awkward for a Man of his Character to  
 profess his Ignorance, or stand still and say  
 nothing: And I'll warrant him, he's too much  
 a Man to take up with that vulgar, poor-  
 spirited, pitiful Expression, *I can't tell*. No,  
 no; he knows better things. As soon as he  
 has strok'd his Beard, and compos'd his Coun-  
 tenance, you shall hear him——Pray be at-  
 tentive. “The Cause, says he, of this most  
 “surprizing Phœnomenon in Nature, is the  
 “*substantial* Form of the Loadstone: which,  
 “because it is (to the great detriment of  
 “Natural Philosophy) together with all o-  
 “ther substantial Forms, utterly unknown,  
 “unless it be that they are of an active na-  
 “ture; we must endeavour to understand it  
 “by its Quality. Now its *Quality* is not a  
 “*prime Quality*, since it does not immediate-  
 “ly flow from the *Elementary Form*. It's  
 “therefore a *secondary Quality*, arising from  
 “the *Form* of a *mixt Body*. Now, *Qualities*  
 “are either *apparent* or *occult*. And these  
 “latter are divided into *Sympathys* and *Anti-*  
 “*pathys*. This *secondary Quality* of the Load-  
 “stone, is to be reckon'd amongst the *Occult*  
 “*Qualities*; the *attractive Power* which we find  
 “in it, being a *Species* of those *Sympathys*  
 “which

Chap. 6. "which we had occasion ~~just~~ now to explain."

Who wou'd imagine but that such words as these, pronounc'd with a grave and magisterial Air, must needs contain some sublime mysterious Sense? Yet if you examine 'em, you'll find 'em to be a Sound without Sense. And you may almost venture to say of the Philosopher what *Aesop's* Fox did of the Statue: *The Gentleman has a very fine Head, I'll assure you; but the misfortune is, I can find no Brains.* Every one confesses, who knows the difference between *Spirit* and *Body*, that Spirits are said to be in a place after another manner than Bodys are. Ask the Schoolmen the difference, they'll tell you in the twinkling of an eye, that Bodys are in a place *circumscriptively*, but Spirits *definitively*. If you can remember these two hard words, ask 'em the meaning of 'em, and you'll be just as wise as you was before. Others will have Spirits not to be in a place, but to be *somewhere*. Ask 'em the difference between being in a place and somewhere, and they'll pretend to laugh at your Ignorance. But you may stay long enough before they be able to give you an Answer.

Recher. That great Philosopher *Malebranch*, speaking of insignificant words, says, "That People take one anothers words upon content.  
de la Ver. " And if their Sound be not harsh and disagreeable to their ears, they have very little Concern for their Sense. They are immediately and without much examination taken for current Coin. Truth has nothing to do in our ordinary Converse; neither Speakers nor Hearers seeming to have any regard

“ regard for it. The greatest Gift of Na- Chap. 6.  
 “ ture, many think, and the most certain  
 “ way to please, is the knack of talking *much*;  
 “ no matter how little to the purpose. And  
 “ the most effectual way to ruin the *Cartesians*,  
 “ Horse and Foot, is, when you attack ‘em,  
 “ to be always provided with a Magazine of  
 “ *unintelligible* Words; These, if any thing,  
 “ will certainly do your business.” The  
 words the Author speaks of, are those of an  
 unlimited general Sense; which represent to  
 us some general confus’d Idea, but nothing  
 particular and distinct. Expressions of this  
 sort are very numerous: Such is that when  
 People talk of Bodys *tending to the Centre*;  
 that they fall downwards by reason of their  
*intrinsick Gravity*; that they ascend because of  
 their *Levity*; that they are mov’d by *Nature*;  
 that they change their *Forms*; that they act  
 by some *Virtue, Quality, or Faculty*. In short,  
 such are all words which don’t distinctly re-  
 present to us either the *Thing* it self, or its  
*Mode*. To those who content themselves  
 with such Expressions, he justly applies the  
 words of *Syrac, The Knowledge of the Ignorant*  
*consists in unintelligible Words*. This same Au-  
 thor does not stick to affirm, “ That many  
 “ Writers compose many Volumes, who have  
 “ not a tolerable understanding of the Things  
 “ of which they treat.”

Thus much of the Kinds and Causes of  
 that Obscurity of Words and Phrases which  
 is involuntary. How this administers occa-  
 sion of contending about Words, is but too  
 evident. For when we dispute with a Per-  
 son whom we don’t understand, we differ not

H

perhaps

Chap. 6. perhaps in Opinion; but about one another's Words, which neither of us understand. Whenever People talk obscurely, you may reasonably expect a Dispute about Words. But if any, whether in the heat of Disputation or no, speak what they themselves don't understand, or what they know to be nonsense; this occasions that ridiculous way of Disputing, which in the third Chapter we call'd *blind Logomachy*.

The same Mischief arises from an *affected voluntary* Obscurity of Stile. This is a great Fault, but no new one, *Quintilian* tells us: Since *Livy* mentions a Schoolmaster, one of whose Precepts to his Scholars was, *That they took care to speak obscurely*; out of a ridiculous persuasion, *That nothing can be elegantly and delicately spoken, but what needs an Interpreter. For some, as Erasmus says, never think themselves ingenious, but when they speak in Riddles.* If we wou'd have Examples of the Philosophers; *Lucretius*, Lib. 1. tells us of *Heraclitus* a great Word-warrior, and famous for his Obscurity of Stile. And the Custom of the *Armenians, Chaldeans, Egyptians, the Magi* among the *Persians*, the *Brachmans* among the *Indians*, the *Ethiopians* and *Tuscans*, to conceal not only Divine but Human Wisdom and Knowledg, is commonly known. That they receiv'd this Custom from *Noah*, is a pitiful Fable; whose Original is owing to a Book which goes under the name of *Berosus*. From the *Tuscans* this Custom was deriv'd to the *Romans*; and from the *Egyptians* to the *Greeks*, by means of *Orpheus* and *Pythagoras*.

The

The Fables of the *Greeks* are well known ; Chap. 6.  
 which, they say, comprehend the whole Body  
 of Philosophy. So are the *Numbers* of *Pytha-*  
*goras*, and *Plato* who borrow'd them from  
*Pythagoras*. They were so intricate, that in  
 succeeding Times any thing of more than or-  
 dinary Obscurity was proverbially said to be  
 more obscure than the *Numbers* of *Plato*.  
*Macrobius* tells us, that the *Pythagoreans* and  
*Plato* obscur'd with Fables every thing they  
 said of the Aerial Deitys; and that when  
 they spoke of the *MOST HIGH* and of  
 the *Mind*, they fled to Similitudes and Exam-  
 ples. *Cicero*, who was so exceeding well vers'd  
 in *Plato's* Writings, owns there are very ob-  
 scure places in his *Timeus*. And *Marcellus*  
*Ficinus*, the late great Restorer of the *Pla-*  
*tonick* Philosophy, says, " That those things  
 " which *Plato* wrote concerning the Soul, are  
 " by no means to be understood in a literal  
 " sense."

The *Admirabilia* of the *Stoicks* are well  
 known; as also the *Arcana* of other Philoso-  
 phers: and *Aristotle's* Books of deep Learning,  
 his *Acroamaticks*, *Esotericks*, *Epopicks*, and  
*mysterious Writings*: and he who, as *Simplicius*  
 writes, instead of a Veil to conceal his Wri-  
 tings, us'd obscure words to disguise their  
 Meaning. *Themistius*, one of *Aristotle's* In-  
 terpreters, does not scruple to say, " That  
 " he endeavours to darken and render his  
 " Writings obscure, as the *Cuttle*, who stains  
 " all the Water about him with his Blood,  
 " when he's in danger of being taken."  
 When *Alexander* was displeas'd that *Aristotle*  
 publish'd to the world what he had taught  
 him



Chap. 6. him privately: Says *Aristotle* to him, "Be  
 " of good courage, Sir; no body will be  
 " able to understand my Writings, besides  
 " you and others my constant Hearers." Perhaps not they, if what *Themistius* says be true, That 'tis madness to pretend to understand all the Sayings of *Aristotle*. And what renders it yet more probable, is the multitude of *Aristotle's* Interpreters: the number of whom, if we may believe *Franciscus Patricius*, amounted in his time to twelve thousand.

Discuf.  
 Peripat.  
 Tom. I. l.  
 10. p. 145.

*Joh. Serranus* complains of *Plato's* Followers, that they had a great Veneration for his obscure way of writing; that instead of interpreting him, they were wonderfully tickled with the pleasure of finding out Mysteries, and with adding Darkness to his Obscurity.

The *Aristotelians*, who cou'd equal their Master in nothing else, at writing obscurely are become greater Doctors than he. So that after all the *Greek*, *Latin*, and *Arabick* Interpretations of him, he's more intelligible without 'em than with 'em. This we owe principally to the Schoolmen, who undertook to translate *Aristotle*, not as he was in the Original, but as translated from *Arabick*.

After this barbarous filthy Rubbish had over-run Philosophy, Lord! what a confus'd Chaos did it immediately become! What a desolate Wilderness was it, cover'd with Briars and Thorns, Darkness and Obscurity! Monstrous Distinctions, and multitudes of Abstractions, were introduc'd into Philosophy. There you might find *Entia Rationis ob-jectivè, subjectivè, and effectivè*: And the Distinction of a Distinction into that which is

is *realis*, and what they call *Rationis*; and this latter is either a Distinction *Rationis Ratiocinantis*, or *Rationis Ratiocinata*. Then follow, rang'd in due order, your greater and lesser *Realitys*, *modal Entitys*, *Formalitys*; then *Acts*, whether *substantial*, *accidental*, *prime*, *secondary*, *compounded*, *divided*, *signate*, *exercite*: Then the *States*, *Amplifications*, *Principles of Individuation*, *Suppositalitys*, *signate Matter*, *Hecceitys*, *Ecceitys*, *Petreitys*, *Quidditys*, *Identitys*, *Desires after a Form*, *a Dread of a Vacuum*, and whole Cart-loads of *Qualitys*. But it's impossible to number up all the Elegancys of the *Albertists*, *Occamists*, *Thomists*, *Scotists*, *Reals* and *Nominals*: Such wretched work have these Gentlemen made both in Philosophy and Theology, by mangling and shewing them in vizards and masquerade, and by false lights; that instead of seeing 'em in their native Loveliness and Beauty, you can discover little or nothing of 'em in their Writings, but Paint, Obscurity and Deformity.

Ask what Reasons induce 'em to write so obscurely? They will tell you, it's to preserve Philosophy from becoming vulgar and common: That it ought to be seen but seldom and by a few; by which means, when it appears in publick, its Majesty will seem to be so much the more illustrious. They'll tell you, this was always the difference between the Sophists and Philosophers; the former boasted and made a shew of what they knew, and the latter conceal'd it. They add, "That the exposing of Nature open and naked, is injurious to her; who, as she has deny'd the knowledg of her self to

Chap. 6. " the Vulgar by natural Difficultys, so wou'd  
 " willingly have her more secret ways be  
 " treated of, not plainly, but by Allegory  
 " and Fable: That Religion it self is myste-  
 " rious, by which means it's preserv'd from  
 " Contempt." They say in the last place,  
 that by this method they preserve it from  
 being prostituted to the Censures and Ill-  
 Usage of the Vulgar; and alledg what *Simplicius*  
 says of *Aristotle*, That he purposely  
 wrote obscurely in his *Acroamaticks*, or Books  
 of deep Learning, to the end he might deter  
 the Slothful and Lazy from the Reading and  
 Consideration of 'em.

Now, don't these Reasons seem very plau-  
 sible and honest? And yet, were it not for  
 the great Veneration I have for Antiquity,  
 I shou'd venture to say they are all mere Co-  
 lour, Cloke and Pretence. 'Twas reckon'd  
 a very great Crime to publish the Holy Rites  
 of the Gentile Worship. The reason was,  
 says *Julius Firmicus*, lest Divine Science being pub-  
 lish'd, shou'd come to the knowledg of the Profane.  
 But *Arnobius* will inform you much better,  
 that the reason why they kept private their  
 Religious Ceremonys, was, that People might  
 not be acquainted with their Impiety, Impu-  
 rity and Folly.

I can't but suspect somewhat like this in  
 the antient Philosophers: They were pur-  
 posely obscure in their Writings, fearing, if  
 they spoke out clearly and intelligibly, they  
 shou'd discover the Imperfection of their  
 Knowledg, the Weakness and Falshood of  
 their Principles; and that the greatest part  
 of their Writings and Opinions are, at best,  
 doubtful,

doubtful, uncertain, incoherent, and ~~dark~~. All Chap. 6.  
 this wou'd be soon observ'd by diligent, impartial and understanding Readers. Better therefore sell these Wares in the dark, lest the Buyers perceive by day-light that they are damag'd and spoil'd; and imitate the Players, who act by night, that they may the better put off Paint for Beauty, Tinsel for Gold, and Bristol Stones for Brillants. These cunning Men foreknew, that talking mysteriously wou'd raise their Reputation. For, as *Lucretius* says, — *Mysterious Words are Fools Idols*. — They foresaw that others wou'd pretend to know what they themselves the Authors never did, that they might be reckon'd Men of a quicker Apprehension than their Neighbours. That some wou'd seek for Mysterys, others wou'd deplore their own Dulness for not understanding, and others still live in hopes that once in their lifetime they shou'd be illuminated to that degree, as to understand this *Mysterious Learning*; or rather, this intolerable Cant and senseless Jargon. Whether they foresaw that their Followers wou'd bestow so much pains, and rack their Wits in explaining and defending their infallible Oracles, that we shou'd not think of a new Philosophy in two thousand years time; I shan't determine. My Lord *Bacon* tells these People plainly, they affected Obscurity, that they might the more easily by false lights put off their adulterated and sophisticated Wares. Their Philosophy is indeed nothing in the world but a huge Clamour and Noise of Words, and about Words. Instead of being Interpreters

**Chap. 3. of Nature,** they became Expositors and Nomenclators: So that Philosophy, as *Fr. Patritius* said, for four hundred years time was nothing but quarrelling about Words. In the Romish Church, the *Peripatetick* Philosophy is wondrously cry'd up and esteem'd: They see many of their Errors are conceal'd by it. For which reason the University of *Paris*, *M. D. C. XI.* made a Decree, which in 1624. was ratify'd by the Parliament of that City, in which they express'd themselves to this purpose; "That *Aristotle's* Philosophy cou'd not be subvertid, without undermining the Foundations of the Romish Church."

At this time these Men, in opposition to the *Cartesians*, will by no means allow the Doctrine of clear and distinct Conceptions to be taught and inculcated in their Schools: this would ruin their Cause. *Aristotle* will serve their turn at a dead lift much better. The Adversarys of the Church have indeed, as the Learned Jesuit *Rapin* informs us, written against him very sharply; such as *Luther*, *Melancthon*, *Bucer*, *Calvin*, *Postellus*, and *P. Scarpus*: but their Invectives he reckons to be very much for the Honour both of himself and his Doctrine.

Thus we see the Reasons why Men affect Obscurity and Ambiguity: Sometimes they do this in jest, pleasing themselves for a short time with others Mistakes. But how often in earnest, by those who propose Questions for Disputation after such a manner, that if you clear one Ambiguity or Equivocation, they'll plague you with twenty more? of which if you find one that's any thing to the purpose,

purpose, I'll assure you, you have made a **Chap. 6.**  
 saving Bargain. Their Rules and Philosophical Axioms are endless causes of Contention; being so *worded* and *contriv'd*, that neither Opponent nor Respondent can well want a Distinction to help themselves upon occasion; but may dispute till they are hoarse, before they are either of 'em any nearer the Knowledge of the Truth.

In this particular they are very much to be blam'd, who causelessly change the Significations of Words. With these may the *Chymists* be number'd, who speak as enigmatically as the Oracle at *Delphos*: also the Inventors of new Sentences, Words, and Methods of Speaking and Writing. Thus *Ramus* bestow'd a new-fashion'd Coat upon *Aristotle*, as *Aristotle* had very kindly done before for his Master *Plato*. Add to these, such who boast of their Paradoxes and Nostrums; and scorn to talk as the *Vulgar*, tho' their Thoughts are exactly on a level. This was a great Fault of the *Stoicks*, and which occasion'd abundance of Strife. They were more extravagant in their Writings than the Poets; and, by refusing to use the common Methods of speaking, seem'd to militate against Notions receiv'd by all Mankind.

Neither ought they to escape Censure, who without necessity use words in a good sense, which are generally understood in a bad one. Such Words sound harsh in our ears, are apt to make us give 'em a perverse Interpretation; and then, *To your Arms, Gentlemen*. Thus *Epicurus* cou'dn't but know what an ill Sound the very Name of *Pleasure* carry'd

Chap. 6. carry'd with it in the apprehensions of many. And perhaps *Des Cartes* had too much Vanity in him, for presuming that there were none either of so little Subtlety or of so cross-grain'd a Temper, but what must infallibly understand his Meaning. He had however no regard for such ; by means of which Neglect, a multitude of verbal Contentions have ever since perplex'd the Learned World, which, but for him, had never been heard or thought of.

To conclude this Chapter: If they who have introduc'd the School-Terms into *Theology*, that they might not fail of having matter for Contention ; as they have done, for instance, who dispute so earnestly about the *Matter* and *Form* of the Sacraments: If these, I say, are in a fault ; I can't think those altogether excusable, who confine themselves indeed to *Scriptural Expressions*, but understand them in a sense quite different from what was ever receiv'd by the generality of Christians. These perhaps may be found to be altogether as unintelligible as the Scholastick Gentlemen. So that it's my Opinion, that he teaches the *Liberal Sciences*, and that best of Sciences, *Theology*, after the best manner, who so speaks and writes as to be easily understood, if not by all, yet by the Majority of those who hear him.



C H A P.

C H A P. VII.

*Of those who take the Words of their Antagonists in a wrong Sense.*

**T**HUS much of those who by writing obscurely give occasion for *Contending about Words*. We come now to speak something of such as misinterpret and misrepresent the Sense of their Antagonists: who pride themselves with an Imagination that they have a clear Notion of their Adversary's Sense; and under this persuasion fall upon him, according to the usual saying, without fear or wit. Like some in their sleep, who dreaming of their Enemys, fall foul upon their Friends. Some misunderstand their Adversarys merely out of Ignorance, others out of Design: They won't seem to understand them, lest they lose an opportunity of quarrelling.

They who misunderstand their Adversarys merely out of Ignorance, are generally Persons of an unconstant wavering Genius. They are always in haste, and have not the patience to sit still and calmly consider the Truth of this or that Assertion; but run on to a third, before they have well examin'd the second; to a fourth, before they understand the third; and so on to the end of the Chapter. Hence 'tis they understand very little of what they read, so perfectly as to  
make



Chap. 7. make but a tolerable Judgment of it :  
 ~~~~~ and yet to hear how confidently they talk,  
 how boldly they censure this Book and that  
 Author, wou'd tempt a Man, who did not  
 know them, to think them some of the ni-  
 cest Judges, and greatest Criticks in *Europe*.  
 They have slightly read over a Chapter, or  
 perhaps but the first Page of *Des Cartes's*  
*Meditations*. Ask them, Well, Gentlemen,  
 what's your Opinion of the Philosopher ?  
*Of the Philosopher !* they'l retort upon you ;  
 of the *Atheist*, the *Sceptick* ! But, say you,  
 he proves the Existence of a God. Yes, they'l  
 reply, so did *Vaninus* : He's an Infidel, say  
 no more of him. How I pity thee, poor  
*Des Cartes* !

Some Persons are naturally incapable of  
 Attention, and of holding their Thoughts  
 long fixt and intent upon any Subject ; but  
 this Levity and Fickleness generally springs  
 from some Distemper of the Mind. In some  
 from an Ambition of being thought Men of  
 a quick Apprehension ; they please them-  
 selves to be thought like *Phormio* in *Terence*,  
 of whom *Geta* gives this Character ;


Phorm.  
 Act. 4.  
 Sc. 2.

*A more sharp cunning Man I never knew,  
 I had not spoken half, he understood me !*

Sometimes it arises from a haughty Con-  
 tempt of the Authors they read ; they are  
 prejudic'd against them, have been told by  
 some body as wise as themselves, that there's  
 little solid and rational in their Wri-  
 tings : and so they are induc'd to read them  
 as lightly as they imagine their Authors  
 write.

write. Sometimes it's owing to a fond desire of knowing every thing : People who are too solicitous to know every thing, are often found to have clear and distinct Conceptions of nothing valuable and worthy to be known. This is often the Case of Men of much reading. It's impossible for them to read with due Attention ; and if so, it's as impossible they shou'd with Understanding. They fancy they see Things which they do not ; and if they find some certain Words us'd both by the Antients and Moderns, they presently conclude their Opinions to be the same. If a Modern mentions the word *Corpuscle*, he's immediately a Disciple of *Democritus* : If he speaks of *Fate*, he's a *Stoick* ; if of *Pleasure*, an *Epicurean* : If he uses any Words, by which any Hereticks thought fit to express themselves heretofore, he'll be immediately branded for one himself, be his Opinion ever so different, harmless and unexceptionable.

Another sort of People, who oppose what they don't understand, are your superficial Wits, who never look any farther than upon the Surface and Outside of Things. These differ from those giddy People we spoke of last : They misunderstand their Authors for want of Attention ; these, we now speak of, for want of Subtlety and Judgment. I don't mean such stupid Wretches, who with much ado get by heart the names of the Sciences, but never understand the Sciences themselves : But those who are not altogether destitute of Parts, who soon see and distinguish the Outside of Things ; their Misfortune is, here they stick. Outward Appearances strike their Senses

Chap. 7.  Senses and Fancys so forcibly and feelingly, that the Mind can't be prevail'd with to any further consideration of the nature of the thing.

Rech. de la Ver. Tom. 1. Part 2. cap. 1. §. 2. cap. 9. §. 1. *Malebranch* speaks much, but very accurately of this Defect of the Understanding; to him we refer the Reader. 'Tis to our purpose to observe, that the Edg and Bent of these Mens Wits, like theirs who are quite stupid, proceed not a step farther than Words, Forms and Methods, whether they be learning the Sciences, or examining the Sense of an Author, or judging of a Controversy. Hence they imagine, that all who speak like one another, think like one another; and that they who differ in Words, must needs also differ in Opinion. Such People seldom dispute about any thing but Words, this is the Delight of their Lives. And tho it be true Prin. Part 1. §. 74. what *Cartesius* says, "That the Thoughts of all Persons are more ingag'd, and more conversant with Words than Things;" yet it is as true, that there's a vast difference between him who contents himself with the bare knowledg of Words, and him who makes use of Words as *Helps*, to bring him to the knowledg of Things.

If you'll give me leave for once to speak a bold Truth, I may confidently affirm, that the greatest part of the Learning of Multitudes fam'd for it, consists purely in the knowledg of Words; I don't mean in Grammar, which professedly treats about Words, but in the Sciences: they have not the least just Notion of any thing, besides those *Barbarisms*, which they have dignify'd with the Title of Terms of Art.

*Gaussenus,*

*Gauſſenus*, ſo often quoted by us, ingenuouſly confeſſes, “ That he, who had for four years publickly read Logick and Me-  
 taphyſicks, whenever he was oblig’d by Custom to argue, in the uſual manner, in Schools, cou’d not but bluſh, out of a juſt Conſciouſneſs how little he underſtood more than the Vulgar beſides Terms of Art: And how fordid and mean, how unbecoming a Gentleman and a Scholar it was, to take the Doctor’s Chair, and there ſet to Sale, and cheat People, with nothing but Noiſe, Smoke and Trumpery.” In another place he ſays, “ That beſides a few Terms of Art, moſt Divines have nothing to diſtinguiſh them from their Neighbours.”

*Hobbes* is juſtly blam’d by *Carteſius*, for ſaying, “ That perhaps Judgment was nothing elſe but the Compoſition or joining of two Names of Things, or Modes, by the Verb *IS*.” He ſhou’d have ſaid, “ That the joining two *Conceptions*, ſignify’d by thoſe *Names*, by the intervention of the Verb *IS*, is what we properly call Judgment.” And yet look abroad into the World, you’ll find *Hobbes*’s Definition to agree with the Judgment of a far greater number of Mankind, than that of *Carteſius*. And as their Judgments are, ſuch are their Reasonings; ſpeak otherwiſe than they do, and you diſſent from them; for they can ſee the difference between the words with their own Eyes, but it’s a harder matter to perceive the Agreement there is in their Senſe. They’ll never own you for *Orthodox*, till you ſubſcribe

**Chap. 7.** subscribe to their Opinions in their own very Words, or in their own Method; whether their Words signify any thing or no, is not material, subscribe, and you are all Friends.

The natural Causes of this Defect of the Understanding, *Malebranch* has treated of at large, as has been said. To the consideration of these, add that of our Education: Children from their very Infancy are habituated to Words which they don't understand; their Forms of saluting, congratulating, giving Thanks; nay, their very Prayers, Sentences of Holy Scripture, and Catechisms, which they get by heart, are all *Arabick* to them. So are many of those Expressions they learn from their Parents, Servants and Neighbours; they speak them like Parrots, and so they understand them.

When we come to the Study of Arts and Discipline, what a vast number of Precepts, Definitions, Divisions, Questions, Answers, Maxims, Theorems, Distinctions, and Terms of Art can we readily give an account of, in answer to the Questions usually ask'd us? Change but a word or two in one of the usual Questions, 'tis ten to one if you don't strike us dumb. We are much like School-boys, who repeat their Lesson out of the Latin Grammar very perfectly, but don't understand one Rule, nay one word they have said. By the way, it seems a strange unaccountable Method of teaching Latin, for Masters to teach us by Rules written in Latin, a Language which at that time we know nothing of, and therefore learn because we know nothing of it.

But

But I don't absolutely condemn all this: Chap. 7.  
 The Memory ought to be kept in exercise, as long as 'tis in its Vigour; and we do well to commit to its keeping not only Things, but Words, Forms of Speaking, Holy Sayings, Emphatical Expressions, and many others, which may be of use to us thro the whole course of our Lives: But, without necessity, which I think very seldom happens, never charge your Memory with words which you don't understand. I don't deny but Childrens Memorys ought, in the first place, to be principally regarded and exercis'd; but then, as soon as ever you discover in them the least Sparks of Judgment and Reason, these are to be encourag'd, quicken'd and cherish'd with the utmost Diligence, and most prudent Management. Let their Memory be exercis'd, not brutishly, but rationally: Let it disdain to keep those Words in store, the meaning of which they know nothing of. Their Masters shou'd remember they are teaching rational Creatures, and not Parrots and Pyes; for 'tis a thousand to one, if People be bred like Magpyes, but they prove Jackdaws the longest day they have to live. The Raven which, after the Fight at *Actium*, saluted *Augustus* in these words, *Hail Cesar, Thou conquering General!* seem'd to speak very much to the purpose, but indeed knew not the meaning of one word he said: Yet the Bird is not to be laugh'd at, he has many Fellows amongst Men, even those who number themselves with the Learned. *Huartus* tells us, " There are *Scrutina*.  
 " Men who, exactly like the Brutes, speak Ingen.  
 " and act only by instinct; so that they often c. 2. p. 68.  
 I " talk

Chap. 7. " talk much better than they can think or apprehend." This is owing to their Education; they are us'd to Sounds which have no Sense, or a very uncertain one. They are accusom'd to speak without consideration, and think themselves mighty wise and learned, if they have their Memorys stuff'd with insignificant Words: They have been accusom'd to admire those who talk readily, earnestly and confidently of things which they don't understand: They are careful about Words, and as careless about their Meaning. Assertions, to which they have been habituated from their Childhood, they will have to be very clear, plain, evident and certain, tho they do not really understand them. If you differ with them in any of those Points, give them Demonstration from Morning till Night, in order to convince them they are in an Error; if they'll vouchsafe to hear, they will not hearken to you, nor believe one word you say.

Besides those who know nothing in the Sciences except Words, there are many, who when they hear the Dictates of their Tutors, or read Books, immediately apprehend, not only the Words, but the Sense of them. But the Fault of these People is this; they never examine the Truth of what they hear and read, nor consider it well; they don't digest it in their Minds, and consequently can never have right Conceptions of the Connexion and Dependence of one thing upon another. *Seneca* says, *such have Memory without Knowledge*; they have Wit and Sense without Judgment; they can very well remember the

the incoherent and independent Sayings of Chap. 7. others: But by taking more care to remember the Words, than the Things signify'd by them, it often happens, that they retain the former in their Memory, but in time lose all distinct Conceptions of the latter.

They can understand and remember a Doctrine, says *Huartus*, and speak of it methodically upon occasion; but then, ask them the Reasons or Cause of the Thing, and you'll soon find them very deficient, and that their Learning chiefly consists in the knowledg of Words. This makes them very angry with those, who disuse the old-fashion'd unintelligible Words, and substitute better in their places. Take away a Beggar's Rags, and you leave him naked; so you do if you take from these the Liberty of using their own Words and Phrases, since they are their Wealth, all the Delight they have, and what conceals and protects them in their Ignorance: they may then well cry out with *Hecuba* in *Euripides*,

*Even now I was rich in Children; but, alas,  
at this time, poor old Woman as I am, I have  
not one left.*

Some Persons understand the Words they hear or read, and the Sense of them too; retain both in their Memory, and never use the Words without the Sense. The Misfortune of these is, that by means of a long Custom of joining this and the other Idea, with this and the other Word, they can't abstract one from the other, this *Idea* from that Word. Hence they reckon, that Truth is confin'd to this or the other Method of speaking; it's in vain



**Chap. 7.** to argue with them. Unless you can alter the Texture and Traces of their Brain, they will never be able to separate their own Sense from their own Words: such are those who don't exercise their own Parts to find out the Truth, and deduce it from its proper and first Principles. They learn nothing of their own Mother-Wit, and by close thinking, but depend wholly upon their Books and Tutors for all they have. Words make so strong an Impression upon these also, as is not easily, nor soon, if ever, worn out. These Gentlemen will talk very fluently, Words are always at hand; and they'll conceive of Matters very readily. But all this while you must suppose them in the Track in which their Tutors did use to lead them; lead them out of that Path, put them out of their Method, and they can neither talk nor understand.

It's quite different with those who make use of their own Reason; they generally think upon Things abstracted from Words: consequently when they come to explain their Opinions, Words do not flow in upon them, but they are forc'd to hunt after such as are proper. So when they read others Writings, they can't so readily, as many perhaps of far less Ability, make themselves Masters of the Sense: But when they have once master'd it, they understand it incomparably well. For, by separating the Words from the Sense, the Shell from the Kernel, they see the Things themselves in their own nature, their Principles, Connexions and Consequences; and this affords them matter for solid Contemplation.

These

These Gentlemen are too intent upon the Chap. 7.  
Consideration of Things, to be often guilty  
of contending about Words. They know  
that Words are mere arbitrary Signs, have  
no resemblance of, or natural Connexion  
with the Things they signify, are conse-  
quently of a doubtful meaning; and there-  
fore as they are variable in themselves, so they  
may be chang'd and vary'd by us whenever  
we see a just occasion. These don't dream  
of a natural Connexion between Truth, and  
certain particular Words of theirs, in which  
they find out deep *Mysteries*, and I know not  
what; or that Words so naturally signify the  
Things for which they stand, that they can't  
be chang'd, unless you change the nature of  
Things with them, which was the Opinion  
of no less a Man than *Plato*. Every body in  
our days rejects so absurd an Opinion in  
words, 'tis pity they cou'd not also be pre-  
vail'd with to disown and disavow it in  
their Practice.

From the close Connexion which most  
People make between Words and Things, a-  
rises that Love which Men have for some  
Words; and the Dislike they have for others.  
Instead of the Things belov'd, they idolize  
the Words by which they are signify'd.  
This is often a great Cause of Superstition.  
Oh! You can't imagine what Majesty, what  
Sanctity, what Authority, what hidden Vir-  
tue, Force and Power there is in some  
Words. 'Tis not enough to say that *Homer's*  
Words are elegant, significant, of a charm-  
ing Sound, pleasant and sweet; yet stately,  
magnificent, &c. Alas! what's this to the  
purpose?

Chap. 7. purpose? Sir, if I am not much misinform'd, *Homer's* Poems will certainly cure you of all Diseases. Drink as freely as you please of strong Liquors from Morning till Night, and there is a certain Place in his Works, I can't immediately direct you to the very Page, which, duly apply'd according to Art, will certainly preserve you from being tipsy. Other Parts of his Works, hung upon Apple-Trees, preserves the Fruit: Some are good against the Toothach, and other parts of his Works will certainly cure the Gout, take my Word for't; a Distemper for so many Ages reckon'd incurable. If you are resolv'd not to believe me, pray read *Ro. Keuchen. in Prolegom. notarum ad Serenam Samonicato*, and you'll find I don't always talk without Book.

To proceed; the Aversion we have from some Words is altogether as great as the Love we have for others. In the general History of *Spain*, we have this Story: Says *Scrutin. Huartus*, Two French Ambassadors came thither, to desire *Alphonſus* the Ninth to give *Ingen. c. 16. p. 501.* one of his Daughters in Marriage to their Master King *Philip*. *Urraca*, the elder Sister, was a charming Beauty; *Blanche*, the younger, was not so handſom: yet the Ambassadors, contrary to every one's Expectation, chose *Blanche* for the sake of her Name; the name *Urraca* having in it, they thought, something odd, uncommon and shocking.

The name of *Henry* is to this Day in *France* reckon'd unfortunate for their Kings. And it's a Story worth relating, that of Pope *Paul* the Second, who being a very tall, majestic,

jestick, and every way handsom Man, when Chap. 7.  
he] was chosen Pope, took the name of *Formosus* the Second; but when the Cardinals told him that the Carcase of *Formosus* the First, after it had lost some of its Limbs, was thrown into the *Tyber*, the Gentleman was startled, and soon weary of his pretty, handsom, dreadful Name. How abominable to us is the name of Tyrant? How hateful to the *Romans* and *Grecians* that of a King? And no further off than *England*, and no longer ago than in the time of *Cromwell's* Protectorship, some People, as *Puff-Dissert.*  
*ENDORF* tells us, had such a Hatred to the Select. word *Kingdom*, that in repeating the Lord's Append.  
Prayer, they wou'd not say, *Thy Kingdom* P. 585.  
*come*, but *thy Commonwealth*, or *thy Republick come*. Free Citys hate the very name of an *Absolute Prince*; and *Strada* tells us somewhere, that *Charles* the Fifth did use to say of the *Low-Countrymen*, *That none were more patient of Slavery, or more impatient of the Name.*

'Tis very well known, that I was always for encouraging Youth to repeat *Comedys* in the publick Schools and Academys. My Friends were easily convinc'd of the Usefulness of such Exercises; but beg'd of me, if I had any thoughts of bringing them into Reputation, not to call them *Comedys* (that's a word which sounds strangely in some Peoples Ears) but *Dialogues between young Students*; that then no body wou'd oppose my Design.

Examples of odious Words and Expressions are innumerable. Thus, in Theology, some can't bear the name of an *absolute Decree*,


Chap. 7. nor others that of *Fate*. The word *Pleasure* will cast some into a Fever, and the word *Atoms* is as malignant to other Constitutions. Talk to some of *doubting of Things not evident*, 'tis well if you go to Bed in a whole Skin. The word *Idea*, and those two harmless Adverbs, *clearly* and *distinctly*, are not by a few reckon'd monstrous and intolerable Guests in a Christian Country. One thinks it a dangerous Expression to say, that God is *positively from himself*. Some will grant you that Brutes have no *thinking Souls*, if you will be so kind to them as not to call them mere *Machines*. Some abhor the word *Novelty*; and others hate to hear of *Philosophical Liberty*. But to say all in a word, many think all Words us'd by an Author they don't esteem, or once us'd by any in an ill Sense, must always have an ill meaning. This often prevents them from reading excellent Sense, because it is express'd partly in words against which they have conceiv'd an inveterate Prejudice. It often happens with these Gentlemen as it did with the *Roman Mob*; who, to revenge *Cesar's* Death, because *Cornelius Cinna* was indeed one of the Conspirators, murder'd *Helvius Cinna*, a Man altogether innocent of the matter, only because he was of the same name. So our Disputers often fall foul on their own Partys and Opinions, being blinded with prejudice against some certain Words, us'd perhaps in a different Sense from what they imagine, to which they are resolv'd never to be reconcil'd.

Nothing

Nothing occasions us to oppose that which Chap. 7.  
we don't understand, so much as Prejudice, which is passing a Judgment before we have heard the Merits of the Cause: Or as *Cicero* Lib. 1. de defines it, when we take things *unknown* for *known*, and blindly assent to them as such: Or as in another place, when we rashly assent to a Proposition which is *false*, or, at best, not *evidently true*. Prejudices spring from two Causes: the first is a Desire of knowing much; the second is our Unwillingness to accustom our selves to such great Attention and Diligence, and Labour, as is necessary to the Gratification of this our Desire. Lib. 1. de Offic. Divinat.

Of all Prejudices none are more mischievous than those wrong Judgments which we make of Men and their Opinions, without examining them. Self-Love makes Men rejoice, when they think they see any thing in themselves by which they excel others. This is a Prejudice seldom conquer'd, especially if Self-Love be assisted with a mighty pretence of *Zeal for Religion*, and a *Love for Truth*.

Multitudes of Prejudices are instil'd into the Minds of Youth by Parents, Masters, and others whom they love, and in whom they have a confidence. If these do but tell them of this or the other Author, what dangerous Tenets, what Poison, Heresy, Sophistry, wrong Reasoning; what impious, profane, ridiculous, absurd Expressions and Doctrines he's guilty of maintaining: My young Master has enough of it, I'll warrant him, he never has any thing to do with him again, tho all the while the Book may be

Chap. 7. be a very learned, excellent, and valuable  
 Performance.

Children sometimes of a brisk Imagination, when they hear Bells ringing, fancy they hear them utter articulate Sounds; others see strange Appearances in the Clouds: So prejudic'd Persons meet with strange monstrous Opinions in Authors, for whom they have no kindness; which are really nothing but Fictions of their own Brain.

Many read Books purposely to find out those Trifles, Errors, Fallacys, Heresys, Blasphemys, which, as they have been inform'd, make up a great part of the Book they are about to read. These People seldom miss their Aim: For being prepossess'd with a Notion of the Book's being heretical, they'd have a poor Invention indeed, if by Misinterpretations, *Innuendo's*, and some other Arts in which they are expert, they cou'd not make themselves believe so. There is no Author but may be taken in a wrong Sense, especially by those who judg before they read. This Book is not fit to be read. Why so? I heard so from a very learned honest Man. Besides, I don't like the Title, and the Preface has no Spirit in it, and the Stile is faulty. Again, it's an ill Book. Pray, for what Reason? I have no Esteem for the Author. Why so? I hear he is for the new Philosophy. However, my Teachers seriously warn'd me to be very cautious of reading him; he talks cunningly, but they tell me there's a Snake in the Grass. Besides, what good can be expected from Men of his Religion, Sect, Society or Party, or even

even of his Country? For did ever any good Chap. 7.  
come out of *Nazareth*? He dissents from us  
in Religion, and shall we hearken to him in  
Philosophy? If he errs in one thing, he  
may in all. Once more; I have no great  
Opinion of this Book. Pray, Sir, your Reason.  
It's written by an obscure Author, I  
never heard his Learning much talk'd of; I  
know the Man, and cou'd never observe any  
thing extraordinary in his Conversation. It's  
very strange indeed how this Carpenter's  
Son shou'd acquire all this Knowledg. You  
can't imagine how unpromising his Counte-  
nance, Discourse, Behaviour, Gate, Dress,  
and every thing observable about him is.

*He's something passionate; and wants the Wit* See Hor.  
*To taste a Conversation so polite;* l. 1.  
*Ungrateful in his Manners, and ill dress;* Sat. 3.  
*And for his Clothes, his Person's made a Jest.*

It's almost incredible, yet very true, that  
such ridiculous pitiful Pretences and Prejudi-  
ces, as these mention'd, of which a multi-  
tude of more Instances might be given, are  
what intirely and absolutely governs the  
greatest part of Mankind, informing a Judg-  
ment concerning Books and Opinions. 'Tis  
as impossible for such to judg rightly, as for  
a Man to see clearly at the bottom of the  
*Thames*. He can see something, but nothing  
distinctly. Prejudices alter the Nature and  
Quality of every thing; that which before  
was a trifling Error, these improve into a  
monstrous Absurdity, or blasphemous He-  
resy, Prejudice changes Truth into Fals-  
hood,



**Chap. 7.** hood, Strait into Crooked, White into Black. Talk to Children about Apparitions, and the next time they are in the dark they see them. After the same manner People are brought to see strange Absurditys, pestilent Doctrines, hellish Contrivances and Designs, in Books written purely for the Good of the Publick, and containing nothing but what is subservient to that End.

If our Passions and Affections take part with our Prejudices, such as Envy, Anger, and Hatred of our Antagonists; the most innocent and inoffensive Opinions in the World shall not fail of being misunderstood and misrepresented, as the most damnable and odious Errors under the Sun.

Pray let none ask me, whether the Wise, the Learned, and the Philosophers be guilty of these Prejudices: For who can be ignorant of the Eternal Feuds which are between those of different Persuasions in Religion, between different Orders and Societys of Men, between different Academys and Universities, and Men of different Studys, between Collegues and School-Fellows, the Admirers of the new Philosophy, and those who prefer the old? Who knows not the Animositys we have against those who seem to slight our Learning, reject our Opinions; who don't enough admire us, as we think; or who have the Confidence to dissent from us? But Instances of this kind are numberless.

Learned Men are, in truth, so far from having acquir'd the Insensibility of the Stoicks, that they have not the Government and

and Moderation of the Peripateticks; and Chap. 7.  
 so 'twill always be, whilst their Studys  
 have not the least tendency to bring them to,  
 but to divert them from the knowledg of  
 themselves: Whilst the Knowledg they hunt  
 after is beautiful to the Sight, but of no use,  
 and makes them proud, seldom the better or  
 the wiser. This is the Wisdom which puffs  
 up, 1 Cor. 8. 1. and Solomon says, *That be-*  
*tween the Proud are perpetual Contentions,* Prov.  
 13. 10. And now, what think you? Are  
 only Porters and Carmen liable to Prejudi-  
 ces?

The most mischievous and detestable sort  
 of Disputants are still behind; I mean those  
 red-hot, fiery, flaming Gentlemen, who lose  
 no opportunity of reviling, discrediting,  
 slander, belying, and (as much as in them  
 lies) of ruining their Neighbours (if they do  
 but dissent from them in Opinions concern-  
 ing things confess'd to be of an indifferent na-  
 ture) in this World, and of damning them  
 in the next; and all this under a blasphemous  
 pretence of Zeal for God and Religion. These  
 Wretches can't hear, talk, nor think  
 of any thing but the horrible Heresys of Men,  
 far more Orthodox, and of a far more Chris-  
 tian Spirit than themselves. And if you  
 don't run into the same Excess of Riot with  
 them, in sending your honest Dissenting Neigh-  
 bours to the Devil and his Angels, in the  
 Lake of Fire and Brimstone, they'll curse you  
 for a *FALSE BROTHER*, a *Lukewarm*  
*Christian*, an *Atheist*, a *Betrayer of the Church*,  
 and what not. "In Men, says *Malebranch*, Recher.  
 "of a feeble, weak Genius, if at any time Tom. 2.  
 "their l. 5. c. 12.

Chap. 7. " their Hatred, or their Fear, be quicken'd  
 " by an ill-grounded Zeal, 'tis hard to tell  
 " what unjust, perverse, bitter Reflections  
 " they'll make upon Persons and Things:  
 " Can these be innocent? I tremble to men-  
 " tion it. But it's my fixt Opinion, that  
 " in order to bring their Minds to a right  
 " Christian Temper, as great a Miracle is  
 " necessary, as that which occasion'd St. Paul's  
 " Conversion. I shou'd pronounce them ab-  
 " solutely without Hopes of Mercy, cou'd  
 " any one be so whilst we have to do with  
 " infinite Power, and infinite Goodness."

In the last place, among those who contend against Words which they don't understand, you may reckon those Men of Business, who are not at leisure diligently to weigh and consider their Adversarys Opinions; and yet won't seem to be ignorant of them. Those also who in disputing are not enough attentive, who will answer without hearing, or considering the Objection: So that oftentimes neither of the Disputants understands the other; but one talks of Chalk, the other of Cheese. You'd think they were in Jest, or playing at Cross-Questions.

Another sort of verbal Contenders are they who won't understand their Antagonist's meaning. They place their *Summum Bonum*, their greatest Happiness in Contention and Contradiction. If you affirm, they'll deny: If you deny, they'll affirm. They hate every Opinion of which they were not the Inventors or Patrons: Like *Laco* in  
 Hist. l. 1. *Tacitus*, who was Enemy to all Counsels,  
 c. 26. but

but his own. These will not understand their Adversarys, for fear by so doing, they shou'd be forc'd to put an end to the Controversy. The *Respondent* won't understand the *Opponent*, for fear of being forc'd to own the Falshood of the Proposition he has asserted. The *Opponent* won't understand the Point in Debate, lest he shou'd be forc'd to believe it, or have nothing to offer against it. They who *envy others*, won't understand, for fear of being forc'd to acknowledg a Truth either found out, or defended by them, or to own our Obligations to them for that Truth: No, they'll first misrepresent him, and then give him an ill Name. They who endeavour to render their Neighbours odious, won't understand them, lest they shou'd be compel'd by their own Consciences to acknowledg that they did them an Injury, and that their raging, brutish Clamours against them were unjust and ill-grounded. They who condemn others without a hearing, won't understand them, lest they shou'd be forc'd to acknowledg the Rashness of their Judgment. *Schismatics* won't understand the Orthodox and Catholick, lest their Separation shou'd be prov'd groundless and unwarrantable. Some won't understand the *Disrespecters of the Antients*, lest they shou'd find the Antients as liable to Error as the Moderns. The *Admirers of Antiquity* won't understand the *Moderns*, for fear of finding something in them excellent and extraordinary, which to the *Antients* was utterly unknown. The *Moderns* don't care for understanding the *Antients*, lest they be found

**Chap. 7.** found to be the Inventors of little or nothing that is new. And many, *who laugh at other Mens Opinions*, won't understand them, lest they themselves shou'd appear ridiculous, in laughing at what was no ways so. They who *write Books of Controversy* in Religion, won't understand their Adversarys, lest by so doing an end be put at once to their Writing and Reputation. They who *dispute for Gain and popular Applause* won't understand their Adversarys, for fear they shou'd have nothing to confute. They *who have misunderstood an Author*, won't understand him, because they scorn to acknowledg themselves mistaken. Our *Contenders about Words* won't understand their Adversarys, for fear of being forc'd to confess themselves Triflers: Too hard a Task for Flesh and Blood, and never done since *Adam* !

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C H A P.


C H A P. VIII.

*The Signs of this Distemper of  
the Mind.*

**P**ERHAPS we shall bestow our Pains to no ill or needless purpose, if we enquire into the Signs and Symptoms of this Evil of the Mind, that we may be prepar'd to consider more attentively the Matter which at any time we read or hear debated, and to take more care in observing and detecting Logomachys wherever we find them. The first sign of contending merely about Words is,

1. *When a Man, sensible enough in other things, shall oppose a Truth universally agreed to by all Mankind; 'tis probable he differs from you more in Words than in Reality.* He can't disbelieve common Principles, known and allow'd by every Man as soon as he hears and understands them. Thus, if the Stoicks affirm the most exquisite Pains to be no Evils, or to have no harm in them; That a wise Man can't be unfortunate, tho' burning to Death in *Phalaris's* Bull: If *Stilpo* the *Megarean* deny'd that there were Men in the World: If some modern Philosophers deny Fire to be hot, the Air in Winter to be cold, Snow to be white; even these *Virtuosi*, tho' they seem to be at such a vast wide difference

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Chap. 8. ference from the rest of Mankind, yet disagree with us more in Words, and in the manner of expressing themselves, than in any thing else.

2. If any seem to deny a thing very easily understood, and which seems to you so clearly and unquestionably true, that you can't possibly deny it your Assent, nor so much as call it into question wou'd you ever so feign; believe that such a one does only in Words, and not really, disagree with you. For Reason is the same in all Men; so that it is impossible for one Man to think a Proposition evident, and another to think it false, if they have a clear and just Notion of its Sense and Meaning. There's nothing more false than that Saying of the *Academicks*, That nothing has so certain Evidence of its being true, but what, for any thing we know, may be false. And there's nothing more evident than that many things are so. What can be more certain than this, that it's more easy to talk as *Pyrrho* does, than to believe one Word he says? Or that he and his Followers are truly call'd a *Sett of Lyars*? If we believe *St. Austin*, the *Academicks* were as dogmatical and positive as any of the Philosophers, and held *Plato's* Opinions for so many Oracles. Only to vex and teaze the *Stoicks*, they wou'd have it that nothing cou'd be perfectly known; that thence they might prove the *Stoicks* knew nothing. Without dispute, there are Propositions evident and certain; and such as are evident to one, are so to another, if he rightly understands them. Some things are so evident, and obvious, and easy to be known, that one wou'd

wou'd think 'twas impossible there shou'd be any Disputes about them ; and yet there are multitudes of Controversys even about such things: An incontestable Proof that we dispute about Words, oftner than we do about Things.

The Truth of Axioms is so manifest and certain, that do but compare the Subject of the Proposition with its Attribute or Predicate, and you'll be forc'd to own it whether you will or no. You can't so much as doubt of it. Let any one deny *that two and two make four*, or that *the Whole is greater than its Parts* ; set them down for merry Gentlemen, who love to hear themselves talk, but don't believe a word of what they say. Many Truths, as evident as these, are notwithstanding made matters of Debate ; particularly many *metaphysical* Maxims, whose Truth is as clear as the Sun. Whence come Disputes then ? only from misunderstanding one another's Words.

What I say of Axioms, I say also of Propositions immediately deducible from them. For few Men are so blind, as not to see the Truth of Propositions, which are the necessary direct Consequences of *first Principles*. Who does not easily conclude, *from its being impossible for the same thing*, at the same time, to be and not to be, that there can be no such thing in nature as a *Round Square* ? All our real Differences are about Things merely probable ; for the finding out of whose Truth we must as much rely on the Report of our Senses, as the Dictates of our Reason ; and trust our own and others Memorys, and

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argue



Chap. 8. argue from the Authority of fallible Men: And at the same time, perhaps we are much more dispos'd to hearken to the Insinuations of our Fancys and Passions, than the sober Dictates of our Reason; and have more regard to what is *Profitable* or *Pleasant*, than what is *True*. Here the Saying certainly holds, *So many men, so many minds*.

But what, *say you*, are there no Disputes about *Things evident*? Yes, undoubtedly. But then they are about Things difficult to be known: Whose Truth lies a *great way off*, and must be brought to us by a *long Train of Consequences*, all which every one is not capable of marshalling in his Head, in due Rank and File, at the same time. Some are not vers'd enough in the Sciences; others have not Quickness enough of Apprehension: some have not Capacity of Mind; others are not duly attentive; or if they be at first, they have neither Patience nor Power to hold it long. Hence 'tis that in difficult Inquiries, some see the Truth clearly, some dimly, and some can see nothing of it at all. Here I wou'd recommend to you this Rule: *Whenever one, no ways inferiour to you in Parts or Learning, opposes what you can't but think you clearly and distinctly see to be an evident Truth; don't believe that his Sentiments are really different from yours, before you have examin'd the Controversy over and over, in all its Branches, with a sedate and attentive Mind.*

3. *Whenever a wise man, in a Dispute, seems to maintain an Opinion manifestly absurd and ridiculous, 'tis much if you guess amiss, by thinking he contends about Words.* They who

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search

search into the Meaning of the *Holy Scrip- Chap. 8.*  
tures, observe this Rule; *When the Words*  
*won't bear a proper Sense without running us into*  
*an Absurdity, to take up with a figurative one;*  
since nothing unreasonable can be justly attributed to the Fountain of Wisdom.

I don't say but the wisest Men may be mistaken; but then we ought to have so much regard for them, as not to think that at every turn they doat, rave, and are out of their Wits. If that of *Cartesius* looks like a Paradox, That "nothing is more equally divided amongst Men than a good Mind:" Thus much however we may grant, *That Reason and a good Understanding are not our Peculiar; but that others also have their Portion and Share of it.* So when *Cicero* says, "There's nothing so absurd but what has been asserted by some of the Philosophers," let it pass for a *Rhetorical Hyperbole.*

Let us imitate the Criticks, who in correcting an Author, if they find any Words which are obscure, or faint, and without Spirit and Emphasis; tho the Reading agree with the most antient Copys, yet they won't believe it genuine, but substitute Words of Life and Vigour in their places. We shou'd do like the *Expounders* of *Riddles*, who diligently examine every Word, that they mayn't miss of one Ambiguity. *Stones*, says one, don't grow in *Switzerland.* No, says our cunning Spark, nothing grows without Nourishment; but, Sir, they are augmented, increas'd and enlarg'd. *Plato* says, "The Ideas of all Things are Eternal:" But do's he say that these Ideas, as distinct and separated,

Chap. 8. not only from the things themselves of which they are Ideas, but also from the *Divine Intellect*, existed eternally? If he do's, that most Elegant Writer *Rapin*, has reason to say, "That these separate Ideas are so absurd, that it is impossible to think how they cou'd enter into the Thoughts of so great a Philosopher as *Plato*". The same Philosopher represents *Socrates* instructing *Alcibiades*, "That the Soul only is the Man; and that the Body is as much distinguish'd from it, as its Instrument, as the Butcher is from his Knife". *Varro* asks, whether they be as different as the *Horseman* and the *Horse*; yet if we imagine *Plato* thought there was no closer Tye between the Soul of a Man and his Body, than there is between the Butcher and his Knife, or the Horse-man and his Horse, certainly we shall do him a piece of Injustice; he cou'd never think at so wild a rate. And, how silly wou'd he be who shou'd go about to confute such an Opinion as this? Don't pretend to prove against the *Peripateticks*, that there is no *Horror of Nature*; That no *Appetite* or *Desire* may be attributed to *Matter* and the *Elements*: For they don't use, nor intend their Words in a proper literal sense. Thus, when *Cartesius* says, That God is positively from himself, you ought not to believe that a Christian Philosopher in his right Senses can entertain such an absurd self-contradicting Notion as that of God's *being*, before he *had a Being*; that he produced himself; and whilst he was yet *Non-existent*, caus'd himself to *exist*. Let none here object to us our *Enthusiasms*,  
Whims

Whims and Freaks in Religion; some will be *foolish and vain in their Imaginations* in all Societys and Conditions of Men; so were the Heathens. But if you charge any gross Absurditys on such as *Socrates, Plato, Aristotle* or *Zeno*, you are in the wrong: They undoubtedly err'd in many things, but then 'twas with Wit and Subtilty; the greatest part of their Writings and Opinions were such as might be expected from the greatest Men destitute of the Light of the Holy Scriptures. And as for the *Egyptians*, tho the Common People, who knew little or nothing of their *Symbolical Theology*, nor the Meaning of the *Hieroglyphicks*, were consequently over-run with Barbarism and Superstition; the Wise and Learned amongst them were free from it, and had as little Respect for their God *Serapis*, as *Jews* have for Bread made a God by Transubstantiation.

4. If any ascribe to his Adversary, who in other things is quick and apprehensive enough, an Opinion agreeable with his present Design, but which manifestly clashes with some other of his avow'd Opinions; it's a shrewd Sign that the Disagreement arises from the Misunderstanding and Misapplication of some particular Words or Expressions. Hence nothing more frequent in Books of Controversy than, Sir, You are repugnant with your self; You contradict what you asserted in such a place of your Writings.

These Accusations are seldom well laid, when charg'd upon Men of Consideration and Judgment. Their Words may seem to be repugnant, when their Opinions are uni-

Chap. 8. form and all of a piece. Pray observe, that I here speak of those Opinions which are founded on and infer'd from *Rational Principles*: not such as we believe on account of the Authority of others, or because we think we remember the Matter of Fact with all its Circumstances, for here the wisest Men sometimes forget themselves. 'Tis not so in Arts and Sciences, where one Proposition depends upon, and is closely connected with another. Here, it's true, Men of Judgment may err, but they can't so easily be inconsistent with themselves; so that we shou'd not rashly ascribe to Men of Accuracy, Doctrines absolutely destructive of the Hypothesis which they maintain.

*Plato*, says *Cicero*, in his *Timæus* and Book of Laws, affirms "that the World is God, "as also the Heaven, Stars, Earth, &c." But must we ascribe this to *Plato* in the literal Meaning of the Words? Is it possible that he shou'd here talk so absurdly of the Supreme Being, who in other places talks so orthodoxly? God, says *Plato* in *Plutarch*, is a Spirit, a distinct and separate Form, without mixture with any Matter, and obnoxious to none of the Passions; and *Cicero* himself, speaking of *Plato*, says, That the *Grecians* deny'd God to have a Body. The same Opinion is constantly ascrib'd to *Plato*; so that when he seems to say what *Cicero* objects against him, he must either speak according to the Sentiments of others, or *Tully* misunderstands him,

Many are greatly offended with some of our Politicians, for affirming that Princes are

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*so much above Law that they are not oblig'd by any: That consequently they can't do amiss, or act illegally, but may do as they please.* These are perhaps crude Expressions; but then thus much may be said in behalf of these Politicians, that above all things they recommend to their Princes the Love of Religion in themselves, and the Encouragement of it in their Subjects; and the strict and constant Exercise of Justice, Clemency, and all the other Virtues; and threatening them with the greatest Severity of Divine Vengeance, if they act contrary to the Duty and Dignity of their Stations, for this very Reason, That they are UNACCOUNTABLE, and their Persons not liable to be try'd by our Courts of Judicature, as Subjects are. Chap. 8.

5. *If any in a Controversy charges his Adversary with a very absurd shameful Opinion, seemingly agreeable enough with some of his Expressions, but to which his Life and Practice have been one continued constant Contradiction; 'tis much if this be not occasion'd by a Logomachy.* Physicians, as has been observ'd, often differ about the Nature of a Distemper, yet agree in their Prescriptions; a certain Sign of their differing about Words.

The best Interpreter of many of the Philosophers Sayings is their Practice. *Laertius* informs us, 'twas *Pyrrho's* Opinion, that nothing was good or evil, just or unjust by Nature; 'twas only Custom made them so: An impious Expression no doubt, and destructive of all common Honesty! But was *Pyrrho* such a Beast as to assert this? without Disputé, if we may believe the same *Laertius*, who adds,

Chap. 8. adds, That there's nothing in the Assertion  
 but what was exactly agreeable with his Life  
 and Practice.

But what shall we say of *Epicurus*? Oh, thinks an unthinking Spark, he's a gallant Philosopher! I love Philosophy; not that which consists in airy Speculations, but which is delicious and palatable: They think of no Company in *Epicurus*'s Gardens, but such jolly boon Companions as *Apicius*: That instead of Books, Pen, Ink and Paper, there's nothing to be seen but Tables cover'd with all manner of Varietys and Daintys, and Bottles of the most rich and generous Wines. If *Epicurus* were alive, and these to visit him, how sadly wou'd they be disappointed in their Entertainment! Ask *Laertius* what was ordinarily his *Bill of Fare* every Day, he'll inform you 'twas nothing but *coarse Bread and Water*. But then our Master of Pleasure far'd more sumptuously on gay Days and Festivals? Why truly here you'll be deceiv'd again, if you promise your self any thing like a *Vitellian Banquet*: Here are none of your Thousands of Fishes and Birds; nor the Livers, Brains, Tongues and Entrails of Stares, Pheasants and Peacocks, the beautiful Birds call'd *Phanicopters*, and Lampreys.

lib. 10. What then? Hear out of *Laertius* what he writes for; "Pray, says he to his Friend, send me a little Cytheridian Cheese, because I design to regale some Friends with a very handsome splendid Banquet." But perhaps *Epicurus*'s Word is not to be taken.  
 Laert. ib. Hear then what *Seneca* says, "When any approaches *Epicurus*'s Gardens, and sees the  
 Ep. 21. "In-

“ Inſcription, Come in Sir, You are very Chap. 8.  
 “ welcome, here’s Pleaſure for your Enter-  
 “ tainment, the greateſt Good Man is capa-  
 “ ble of enjoying : You’ll find an honeſt  
 “ Maſter of the Family, extremely hofpita-  
 “ ble and ſincerely kind: He’ll entertain you  
 “ with very good Barley-Cakes, and as much  
 “ clear Spring-Water as you pleaſe to drink,  
 “ and will take what Care he can to convince  
 “ you that you are very welcome.” Many  
 wou’d think it very hard to live ſuch an ab-  
 ſtemious Life, who notwithstanding are al-  
 ways clamouring and declaiming againſt *Epi-  
 curus* and the *Epicureans*. If any who liv’d  
 in extreme Poyerty, in the ſtricteſt Tempe-  
 rance, yet with the greateſt Content, ſhou’d  
 publiſh an Opinion that Riches were the  
 Chief Good; I ſhou’d preſently be inclin’d to  
 think that he underſtood the word *Riches*  
 in another ſenſe than we generally do. The  
 ſame I judg of *Epicurus* when he uſes the  
 word *Pleaſure*: It’s the moſt improbable Sup-  
 poſition in the World, if it be not impoſſible,  
 that a Man ſhou’d live ſo ſtrictly as he liv’d,  
 and have ſuch looſe licentious Principles,  
 as it’s generally believ’d he had. I wiſh our  
 Divines wou’d more frequently judg of Mens  
 Opinions by their conſtant Practices: Did  
 they follow this Method, they wou’d not ſo  
 often injure their Neighbours out of Conſci-  
 ence, and ſet whole Kingdoms and Common-  
 wealths in a Flame, under a Pretence of *Pre-  
 ſerving the Church*.

6. When in a Controverſy the Diſputants prove  
 both the affirmative and negative Part of the  
 Queſtion by the ſame Arguments, it ſeldom fails  
 but



Chap. 8. *but the Question in debate is either wrong put or misunderstood*; for knowing acute Men can't but see the Tendency of an Argument, especially if the Consequence be easy and clear: And therefore when an Argument is retorted upon them, there's generally some Misunderstanding in the Case. Two *Opposites* can't be prov'd by the same Argument, therefore those seemingly contrary Propositions can't be *Opposites*, nor contrary. To give an Instance:

*Claudius Salmasius* and *Daniel Heinsius*, two bright Ornaments of the last Age, held a mighty Controversy concerning the *Hellenistick* Language; whether the *Septuagint* Version of the Old Testament, and the New Testament, were written in that peculiar Language, or Dialect, call it as you please, or no? No, says *Salmasius*: I beg your Pardon, says *Heinsius*. Well, Partys were made, and sharp Books written on both sides; but a Passage worth reading is *Salmasius's* Conclusion of his Book, which he calls *the Funeral of the Hellenistick Language*. He introduces *Heinsiolus* (as he ridiculously calls his Adversary, the great *Heinsius*) as the *Phoenix* (not the *Phoenix* you may assure your self) of the Age, the *Regaliolus* (forsooth) or *Little Wren* of the Learned; and the *Luscinola*, or *little Nightingale* (by the way one wou'd think Wrens and Nightingales small enough without the Epithet *little*) I say, the *little Nightingale* of Eloquence, inconsolable, and sighing in mournful Notes the Loss, not of *Hylas* nor *Hermegardes*, but of his Daughter, that Dear and Lovely Girl, his chief and only  
Delight,

Delight, nam'd *Hellenistica* (again with your Chap.8. *Diminutives*!) violently ravish'd from him by the *Great Salmasius*, tho less, it seems, than little *Heinsius*. Can any thing in the World be more ridiculous, more pedantick, more rude, more ungentlemanlike, or more provoking than this canting, insulting Rhapsody of *Salmasius*? And what was all this for? Truly, besides the Digressions, such as References to the *Jewish, Grecian* and *Roman Antiquitys*, Considerations of some Places of Scripture, and other Writers; all that's left is a mere *Noise about nothing*, a pitiful *Logomachy*. They who say that the Language in which the Septuagint and New Testament are written is the *Hellenistic*, mean by it a Language that's not purely Greek, but partly patch'd up with *Hebraisms, Syriasms* and *Chaldaisms*: That such is the Greek of the Septuagint and New Testament, is past all Dispute. Pray what does *Salmasius* and his Followers say to this? Why, that these *Hellenisms* are not a *Language*, pray observe; consequently not an *Hellenistic* Language, but a mere Device. Well, what's all this to the purpose, *Great, High and Mighty Monsieur*? Your Adversarys will allow you to call it an *Hebraistic, Exhellenistic, Aphellenistic* Language, or Dialect if you please, or what else you please, they won't stand with you about a Word. Oh! but says shrewd *Salmasius*, I have gain'd my Point; for if what you call so be not the *Hellenistic Language*, by your own Confession the Septuagint Translation and New Testament can't be written in the *Hellenistic Language*.

Chap. 8. *Language.* What egregious Trifling was this about Words!

7. *Most of the Disputes concerning Definitions and Divisions are mere Logomachys.* For (not to insist, that these Disputes are but about the Method and Manner of treating the Sciences, which is a kind of contending about Words) Definitions are either *Nominal* or *Real*. In *real* Definitions, or Definitions of the *thing it self*, we regard more its Regularity and Conformity to the Precepts of Logicians, than we do its Truth. This Definition is somewhat obscure; add this Word, 'twill be much clearer and more intelligible. By no means; 'twill then be too long by two, if not three Syllables. In one Definition there's a sad Complaint, there's no *Genus* to be found: And in another, he's a mere Stranger, he claims Kindred of the rest of the Words in the Definition, but not one Soul will own him. Lamentable Cases! One defines *Logick*, the *Art of thinking aright*. And why *aright*? says another; is it not included in the word *Art*? *Grammar is the Art of speaking well*. Yes, and *Writing* too, says another. Your Pardon, says the first. How ridiculous is it to bring *Copulatives* and *Disjunctives* into Definitions?

To dispute about *nominal* Definitions, is certainly to contend about Words. But there are multitudes of these which pass for Definitions of the *Thing* it self, and not of the *Name*. I define a Cause to be, *a Principle distinct from that of which it is a Principle*: You'll define it otherwise perhaps; I'm content. But according to my Definition, *Mat-*

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ter and *Form* can't be reckon'd two *Causes* of Chap. 8.  
*Body*; one being only *mentally*, the other *mo-*  
*dally* distinguish'd from *Body*. And what  
harm is there if they be not? Is there any  
Injury done to the Commonwealth? But nei-  
ther are they Parts of a *Body*, if you define  
a Part rightly, when you say, 'Tis a thing  
*really distinct from every other thing of the*  
*same whole to which it belongs.* I confess these  
Definitions will deprive Matter and Form of  
some Titles of Honour, but the Principles of  
*Body* will be never a whit the less noble.

You tell me my Definition of Motion is  
very faulty, because it only agrees with *local*  
• *Motion*. And suppose I be minded to define  
only *Local Motion*, or to call nothing *Motion*  
but what is *Local*, what ill Consequence can  
you infer from hence? Consequence! Why,  
mercy upon us! at this rate *Generation*, *Cor-*  
*ruption*, *Augmentation*, *Diminution*, *Alteration*,  
won't be *Motions*. Pray dear Good Sir, don't  
be out of Patience, or out of Heart; in-  
stead of their old names given them by their  
Godfather *Aristotle*, they shall have as new,  
pretty, modish, and fashionable a name gi-  
ven them as you can wish.

Not less trifling are the Disputes con-  
cerning the Divisions of Things: As when the  
Debate is, Whether Being or Entity be more  
properly distributed into ten Categorys, or  
two, or three? Whether it be better to di-  
vide *Magnitude* into a *Line*, and a thing *de-*  
*lineated*; and then the thing *delineated* into  
Surface and *Body*? Or to divide it immedi-  
ately into *Line*, *Surface* and *Body*? Whether  
there be five Senses, or, as *Scaliger* will have  
it,

Chap. 8. it, six, or more; according to their Notion, who won't allow *Touching* or *Feeling* to be a single Sense, but to be diversify'd by the variety of its Objects? Whether there be only two sorts of *Plants*, according to *Moses's* Division of them into *Trees* and *Herbs*; or three, *Trees*, *Shrubs*, and *Herbs*; or four, *Trees*, *Shrubs*, *Herbs*, and *Garden-Herbs* fit for Food; and whether a fifth sort may be allow'd, such as *Mushrooms*, *Puffs*, &c. I fancy at a Feast, a Man, who was very hungry, wou'd soon grow very angry, to hear the Carvers dispute into how many Fragments this *Joint of Meat*, or that *Sturgeon* shou'd be divided; and of the best manner of cutting up this *Hare*, or that *Pullet*, till he had quite lost his Appetite. And is it not great pity that Men, so earnestly desirous of Truth, shou'd be so long hinder'd from the Sight and Knowledg of it, by, I don't say needless silly Distinctions, but by long, useless Controversys about them? when Divisions may be arbitrary, if no considerable part be omitted.

8. *If any one be very tenacious of some general Expressions, which either signify nothing distinctly, or admit of divers significations: if when desir'd to explain them, he hesitates, and can't or won't find out plainer Words to express himself by; but will have his own to be so clear, that you can't well misunderstand him: Disputes with such are generally merely verbal Contentions.* Some imagine if a Word be common, it must of consequence be clear and significant, tho it be ever so confus'd and indistinct. If they think they understand themselves, they won't suppose but you understand

derstand them as well. And perhaps you do: Chap. 8.  
 for ask them the meaning of this and that Word, and the determin'd Sense in which they use it; they can't give you a ready Answer, but will be very angry at your Imperitinnce in asking Questions about Words so very plain and usual. And you can by no means persuade them to omit for the present a Word liable to exception; if they do this, they can *hold forth* no longer. If these Men are zealous for *Liberty*, the word *Liberty* is in their mouths on every occasion. If their Superiours do any thing contrary to their Inclinations and particular Interests, it's an Infringement of their *Liberty*: if they act any thing indecently, they are privileged to do so by their *Liberty*. Ask them the particular Sense in which they take the Word, they won't take it well of you.

But you go on; Do you mean the Liberty of the *Community*, or of *single Persons*? If the latter, do you mean a *Freedom from all Subjection*, or from some certain *troublesom or chargeable Dutys*, to which your Subjection renders you obnoxious? A few such Questions as these will make them quite out of Patience with you. *What, don't you know what Liberty is? You are not fit to be talk'd with.* Some are very earnest for the Restitution of their *Rights and Privileges*, who can't name one but what they enjoy. But they think in general these Words signify some very great and excellent thing, which if they were once in possession of, they shou'd be wonderfully happy.

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Chap. 8. Here let it be observ'd, that an obstinate adherence to obscure and ambiguous Words, is a sign of a Mind fond of contending about Words: but that, on the other hand, there are some who will not be satisfy'd with the plainest Words. Thus the *Arians* cou'd by no means understand *ὁμοῦς*, a word signifying *one of the same Essence*; not because 'twas obscure, but because 'twas too plain and easy to be understood.

: 9. *If two dispute about a Proposition, of which you have a very clear and distinct Perception; but at the same time you apprehend the Meaning, Drift and Design of the Arguments of neither the one nor the other: you may be pretty certain that they dispute merely about Words.* For if you, who calmly consider what is offer'd on both hands, understand neither; how shou'd they, who, in the heat of Disputation, consider more what they themselves have to say, than what their Adversarys say or have said, be thought more intelligent? Besides, the *Hope* of Victory, and the *Shame* of being outdone (which Considerations can't but at such a Juncture, and on such an Occasion, distract their Thoughts in some degree) must needs be a means, not at all of *illuminating* the Understanding, but of rendring it *dark* and *confus'd*. But let it be observ'd, that the Rule holds good, when the Debate is about a *Thesis*, in an *Art* or *Science*, which you know equally well with either of the Disputants; which I wou'd also have well remember'd, when we come to speak of the other Signs of Controversys being merely about Words. For to the ignorant many things

things are *obscure* and *inextricable*; which to the Learned appear with all the Clearness imaginable. One thing more I wou'd have observ'd, that the four last Signs of a Disputation's being merely about Words, is principally apply'd to those Debates in our Academics, where *Respondent* and *Opponent* speak audibly *Face to Face*. I shall add no Examples, they being easily taken notice of, and every day obvious to the *intelligent* and *considerate* Reader.

10. *If notwithstanding your Attention, and perfect Knowledge of the Thesis debated, you can't understand the Argument which the Opponent brings to invalidate its Truth; it's a Sign of a Logomachy.* For many times the Opponent offers his Arguments against a Proposition, only with a general Design of saying something, before he has well consider'd what is proper to be said, and really for his purpose. No wonder if in such a Case, which often happens, that you don't understand the Objection, when the Opponent himself has not a clear Notion of it. The Respondent fights with a shadow, has either no Enemy, or one not sufficiently provided with Arms: He begins the Combat with a mighty Noise, and that's the main of his Artillery: His Pistols are charg'd with Gunpowder enough, but there's never a Bullet in them; they give a great Report without doing the least Execution, and may put a faint-hearted Man in a fear, but can do no other mischief.

11. *If in a Disputation, you apprehend very well, both the Proposition debated, and the Argument of the Opponent against it; but, with all*

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**Chap. 8.** *your Attention, can't understand the Defence of the Respondent; you may reasonably suspect, that the Remainder of the Dispute will prove a mere Logomachy.* For this is often an infallible sign, that the Respondent can see nothing exceptionable in the Opponent's Argument: He must not say nothing, nor poorly give up the Cause; his wisest way is therefore to puzzle the Opponent with hard words, which neither he himself, nor any Mortal besides can understand. If you can't fairly beat your Adversary, throw Dust in his Eyes. Ply him with unintelligible, insignificant Words; you'll quickly tire him at least with Sounds without Sense, and Words without Meaning.

12. *If in a Disputation, after you have for some time very well understood both Respondent and Opponent, on a sudden a Mist arises, and you understand neither; you may well conclude, that all the Remainder of their Disputation will be a Contention about Words.* This is the misfortune of almost all Disputations, where the Contest is not so much for Truth, as Victory. In the beginning you easily observe Perspicuity and Order: The Arguments, Replies, and Instances are all opposite, and intelligible. You see the Disputants, and keep them company a long time; when on a sudden they are vanish'd, and quite lost. You can see neither of them; nor they, fighting in perfect Darkness, can't be well suppos'd to see one another; so that their Arguments must needs be merely blind *Logomachys*.

To these Signs of a Controversy's or a Disputation's being about Words, you may add what was said before concerning the Causes

ses of Logomachys; Causes being the Signs Chap. 8.  
of their Effects, as Clouds are of Rain. I  
wou'd not have any think these Signs equally  
certain or infallible; or that any, finding one  
or more of these Signs in a Debate, shou'd  
presently conclude it a Logomachy. without  
farther examination. No; before he pre-  
tends to pass a Judgment, let him in the first  
place be sure to understand the Opinion of  
both Disputants, and then compare them to-  
gether with all the Exactness and Diligence  
he is master of. By this time he may make a  
pretty certain Judgment. His Opinion of  
the Debate, before such Examination, cou'd  
be grounded only on Probabilitys.

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## C H A P. IX.

*The Remedys against this Evil.*

**A**MONG other Remedys against this Evil, whether it be proper to prescribe *Hellebore*, merely from the Authority of *Carneades*, I am not over-confident. If that Herb has so much Virtue in it as to clear the Understanding of all its Prejudices, and the Mind of its fond Desire of Vain-glory: If it be an infallible Help against Anger, Hatred, Envy, Party-taking, the Love of Quarrelling, unjust Suspensions, and Zeal without either Knowledg or Charity: If it be good to settle fickle and volatile Wits; to reduce wandering Thoughts; and to clear the Sight of our Understandings, that it may discern the Nature and Propertys of Things thro the Disguises and Misrepresentations of Words: If *Hellebore*, I say, has so much Virtue in it, it's certainly a very sovereign Medicine, an excellent, I had almost said a never-failing Remedy against the Distemper under consideration. *Carneades* and many of the Antients used it for these Purposes; but I don't thorowly understand the Nature of Herbs, and therefore will not turn Mountebank. In this Chapter I shall treat of such Remedys as are good for the Cure of the Distemper; in the next, which will be the last, of those which

which are of use to preserve us from it. Chan. 9.  
And,

1. An excellent Means of destroying all Logomachys at once, Root and Branch, wou'd be an *Universal Dictionary*, compos'd by a Man, or rather Men of very clear Heads, quick-sighted in discovering, and acute in discerning the Opinions of the Learned; and who are diligent and ready, and able to teach them to others in a plain and natural Method. They shou'd insert and explain *Alphabetically* all Words and Forms of speaking which have occasion'd Logomachys: They shou'd put a distinct Mark upon such Words as are of *no Signification*, those of an *uncertain*, those of a *various* and *unconstant*, and those of a *confus'd* Signification: All Words which have a *certain*, *constant*, and *distinct* Signification, shou'd have a Place there, shou'd be exactly and clearly defin'd, and Examples shou'd be added to illustrate the Definition: And notice shou'd be given if these Words be us'd by any Authors in an uncertain, unconstant and confus'd Sense; for Words us'd by the Learned in a certain limited Sense, will, when they fall into vulgar Mouths, have their Sense alter'd and depriv'd, and their Signification mutilated or enlarg'd.

Such a Lexicon wou'd be of unspeakable Advantage to the Learned World, both for the understanding of the Arts and Sciences, and the Diminution, at least, if not the utter Destruction of all Contending about Words: 'T wou'd be an Undertaking worthy of the Learned Age we live in, which, above all that have preceded it, has with the greatest

Chap. 9. Industry arm'd themselves against the Cheats of unintelligible Cant, and has had the most generous and ardent Ambition of acquiring a clear and distinct Knowledge of Things. If the Work be too great for a few, let it be distributed amongst many: Let one be confin'd to the Consideration of one Art, and another to that of another Science: Or rather, let this Man be at the pains to examine one Author, and that another, whose Words and Expressions have, thr' their own or their Reader's fault, occasion'd Disputes about Words. To give an Instance, let one Gentleman take in hand the Works of *Renatus Descartes*, pick out all those Words of which his Adversariys complain; then range them in *Alphabetical Order*, explain and define them clearly, and without the least Ambiguity, according to the Sense of the Author: Let the same be done by other Authors, and many Indexes collected into one body, will finish and compleat the *Universal Dictionary* we speak of.

2. Another means of putting a stop, if not an end to these Contentions about Words, wou'd be to clear the Arts and Sciences, not only of all those words which either have none, or a very uncertain, or confus'd Signification, (these are a perpetual occasion of Logomachys) but of those also which by their lesser Clearness and Perspicuity administer Fuel to Disputations, which, express'd in plainer words, wou'd soon vanish into smoke; especially those which were invented for no other reason than for increasing the number of Disputes, for obscuring things easy to be understood, with

with hard unheard-of Names; for concealing the Ignorance of the Inventors, and for raising them in the esteem of the Vulgar. *Stephanus Gaussenus* speaking of the Question, Whether Theology be an *Art* or *Science*? says it's a Logomachy. Wou'd you see this Truth with your naked Eyes? Why then, lay aside for a little time those equivocal Words, *Art*, *Science*, *Sapience*; and enquire into the nature of *Theology*, without calling it by this or that Name; and then consider our modern Disputants, and you'll find 'em agree entirely in the main Points, and disagree in little, if any thing, but Words, the fatal reigning Evil of our Age!

I wou'd by no means be so morose and ill-natur'd as not to tolerate even the School-Terms, those of them which are *significant*, and have met with the *universal Approbation* of the Learned: But let them be tolerated on this condition, that they live amicably and friendly, and don't at every turn break the Peace and commit Disorders; let such be banish'd the Commonwealth. Some wou'd recommend them to us by saying, They often express more in twenty words than we can, by our common Discourse, in so many Lines. But I say, it's better to express that in many words, which many understand, than to express in few words what scarce one understands: It's better to use ten words which require no words to explain them, than two or three which require a thousand. There are Philosophers in our days, who in Books of no prodigious bulk, have, without the assistance of the Schoolmen, comprehended  
more

Chap. 9. more than is perhaps in all their Volumes put together. But you'll say, it's a difficult Task to quit the School-Terms; it's impossible to persuade the *Scotists* and *Thomists* to part with those Delicacys.

Hor. L. 2.  
Ep. 1.

*Either because they learnedly discard  
All Truths but what are to their Notions squar'd;  
Or judge, if Juniors shou'd their Wisdom teach,  
It wou'd their Ignorance, in Years, impeach;  
And blush, the Man ingenuously shou'd own  
That all was Stuff, the Boy had swallow'd down.*

Let every one do as much towards it as he can, and carefully abstain from all ambiguous Words; give an instance that Philosophy may be without them, and inculcate as much to his *Disciples* and *Pupils*. If such Words are propos'd to him, let him not be ashamed to own that he does not understand them, or think it dishonourable to ask the Meaning of them: If every one took this Course, every one wou'd be compel'd to speak so as to be understood. Learned Men have made no inconsiderable Advances towards speaking and writing plainly and intelligibly. We begin to be inquisitive after the Sense of every Word, and have almost forgot to admire *Nonsensical Jargon*: Nor are we ashamed to make profession of our Ignorance of those Words which our Authors themselves seem not well to understand; our modern Philosophers have approv'd themselves Interpreters of Truth and Nature, not of Words.

3. 'Twou'd very much diminish the number of Contentions about Words, if Men wou'd give over writing

Writing against one another's Persons, and enter Chap. 9.  
into no other Consideration than that of the Opinions their Antagonists maintain'd. Did we write not so much against Men, Books and Partys, as purely against their Errors, we shou'd not so often contend merely about Words. The Opinion we endeavour to confute, is most times really repugnant to our Sentiments of things; but when our Aim is, not so much to shew the weakness of the erroneous Opinion, as of the Person who maintains it, 'tis much if we escape a Fallacy of Words. A Person who labours to prove *Descartes* a Sceptick, may, by misunderstanding his Words, wrong both his own Judgment and the other's Reputation; but if he can disprove that *Scepticism*, which he imagines to be the Consequence of *Descartes's* Opinions, without personal Reflections, he will do something worthy of a man's Notice.

But, say you, the Opinion of this Man, that Author, or such a Sect, is wicked and impious. What then? Disprove that wicked, impious Opinion: Spare it not, but bring your strongest Arguments against it; and no body, but they who have a very fond Conceit of their own Opinions, will find fault with you. What necessity is there of charging one with this Opinion, another with that, when they both perhaps disclaim the one and the other? But young Men are to be caution'd against certain Authors, Books and Factions. I'm of your mind; they ought not only to be warn'd, but arm'd against them: but let it be with the sound, substantial Knowledge of the Truth, and undeniable Arguments, and not with personal Prejudices,  
and



Chap. 9. and Invectives against Books they never read, and Men whose Principles they never consider'd nor understood. We render Truth it self suspected, when we go about to defend it by the same Arts which People use, when they wou'd trick, deceive and abuse us. One good Property young Men have, many of them, that they seldom fail of reading, and carefully examining a Book which they see censur'd, or threatned to be suppress'd. On this very account the *Cartesian* Philosophy is much more oblig'd to its Enemys than its Friends, for its being so universally read as it has been throughout the civiliz'd part of the World. Let us therefore contend against *Errors*, rather than those whom we judg *Erroneous*, and prefer Truth before Reputation and a great Name: But, we have a certain Malignity in our Temper, which makes us sour and ill-natur'd. Thus 'tis not enough to say, *God is not from himself positively, so as to be the Author of his own Being*; this is flat and insipid; there's no Spirit nor Life in it: Ill-will must go farther, and seek an Author for the Opinion; then he's in his Element, and thus he begins: *Descartes*, that Blasphemer of God, has the Impudence to say that *God is positively from himself*; as tho he himself had produc'd himself, and so was, before he was.

4. A good way to lessen the number of Logomachys wou'd be, to dispute not so much of general Ideas, as of the several Species or Kinds of Things; and to descend from Universals to those Notions of Things which are more particular and distinct. The Marks by which we distinguish general Notions from one another, are not  
so

so manifest and legible as those which are stamp'd upon Words of a more determin'd and limited Signification. Hence 'tis that most Disputes concerning the Sciences relate to the *General* Parts of *Physicks* and *Metaphysicks*, for example, and to the *Prolegomena*. When we come to Particulars, Controversys will cease; and Logomachys will lessen, if not wholly vanish.

Besides, we often use Words in a more confin'd and narrow Sense than our Antagonist does; so that he does not understand us clearly. This sets us to Disputing; which will be soon over, if we don't wander up and down, and lose our selves in the *Terra Incognita* of *General* and *Abstracted* Notions, but come directly to the particular Point in debate. *Changes in a Kingdom or Commonwealth are of dangerous Consequence*, says one: No, says t'other. How now shall we reconcile these two People? Very well, when they come to explain themselves: For, one talks of changing the *essential* Form of our Government, the repealing our Laws, Customs, and antient Statutes, and a total Change and Alteration of our Constitution. By Changes in a Government the other means, that by the Excellency of the Prince's Administration, and other concurrent Circumstances, our Manners are reform'd, Piety is encourag'd and promoted, and Learning flourishes: so that these agree as soon as they understand one another.

But to proceed from these general, to some more particular Remedys against Logomachys; and since we are as liable to contend about Words as any other, let us, first  
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Chap. 9. of all seek after Means for our own Cure; and then concern our selves for that of others.

1. The first Remedy to cure us of the Folly and Vanity of contending about Words, shall be much the same with that which *Descartes* prescribes to cure us of our Prejudices: He persuades us, *Once in our Lives to doubt of every thing, and not to admit one Proposition to be true, before it has been carefully and thorowly examin'd, and found to be built upon a lid Foundation; its Truth being perceiv'd by us so clearly and distinctly, that it's impossible for us any longer to refuse giving it our Assent. Let us thus use our selves in a particular manner to doubt of the Truth and Importance of all Controversys which have been on the Stage in our time, or which are at present: Whether they be about Words or Things; or partly about one, and partly about the other. And we shall never want Cause to doubt of the Truth of many things; whilst Contentions about Words are so common; whilst their Causes are so natural to us; when we consider how usually they deceive Persons of great Learning, how many kinds there are of 'em, and how they have spread and scatter'd themselves abroad throout all the Arts and Sciences.*

The Time of our Lives in which we first engage our selves in Controversys, is very remarkable. 'Tis in our youth, when all our Learning consists in the remembrance of a Heap of Words at the best, very confusedly and imperfectly understood. So that we are taught to dislike Opinions, before we well know what they are: If our Tutors don't approve of 'em, we condemn 'em, right or wrong.

wrong. It's difficult, even in those of *riper* Chap. 9. *Years*, to interpret an Author fairly, for whom they have an Aversion or Contempt. And it's as difficult fairly to interpret a Book, which for Reasons best known to our selves, we are resolv'd to answer before we have read it.

These things well consider'd, shou'd me-thinks convince us of the necessity of being cautious and wary, in the first place, in judging of the *Importance* of a Controversy; and then, if it be really of weight, (for others ought to be slighted) in examining whether the Controversy be indeed wholly about things themselves, or whether they do not in some degree consist of *Contentions about Words*; and in distinguishing one from t'o-ther.

I wou'd not have any prejudic'd against this Rule by an imaginary fear of its leading them into Scepticism. For, let *Descartes's* Precept of disbelieving, or doubting of the Truth of all Propositions before evident Proof, tend ever so much to *perplex* our Understandings, and by that means to *tempt* them to despair of knowing *any thing*, because *some things* are not to be understood; and to demand *Certainty*, where only *Probability* is to be had: Notwithstanding all this, I say, my Rule holds good, and has not one ill Consequence attending it. For, be the Controversy of ever so great Importance, what Harm is there in deferring to judg, whether it be concerning things really different, or only about Words *ill-express'd*, and *misunderstood*, till I am more satisfactorily inform'd of the Matter; tho that shou'd not happen till Dooms-day.

Chap. 9. day? I can't think but I shou'd act very excusably, yea justly and prudently in so doing. For I don't doubt of the truth of any momentous Proposition, on the Knowledg of which my Salvation depends; but whether it be possible for a rational understanding Man to believe that certainly false, which I as firmly believe to be undoubtedly true: or, whether the difference between us be not more about Words than Things; so that by contending with one another, we shou'd only make our selves ridiculous, by fighting with our own Shadows, instead of Substance and Reality. To give an Instance: To doubt whether there be *one* God or *many*, and an Adherence to this Doubt, is (if in any Case not wicked, yet) certainly very dangerous, and apt to be attended with fatal Consequences. But, if any doubt, whether the *Gentiles* did really hold a *Plurality* of Gods, and therein totally disagree with us Christians; his Doubt may perhaps be justly thought to proceed from want of Knowledg and Reading: But all this does not prove it *damnable*. So far from it, that it seems an almost infallible Sign, that the Man is so fully convinc'd in himself of the *Unity* of the Godhead, that he hardly thinks it possible for any to disbelieve it.

2. Frequent and serious Thoughts of a wise Observation of my Lord *Verulam*, may also, I think, be of use towards effecting the Cure of this great Evil of contending about Words: *It oftens happens*, says he, *that a learned, intelligent Person hears ignorant Men violently arguing a Point, and seeming to differ about it as widely, as the East does from the West, who yet have the very same Sentiments, and do entirely*

entirely agree even in the Matter debated, tho Chap. 9.  
they themselves don't know it; but dispute on, till they are weary, and just as wise as when they began. If now, one Man be capable of observing this in another, who yet can boast of no such vast Superiority of Judgment above other Men; how credible, if not certain, is it, that the infinitely wise God, the only Searcher and Knower of Hearts, observes as much trifling Impertinency, and much more, in the Debates and Controversys of the most learned, intelligent and accurate of frail Mortals in their present State?

3. But the Prejudices we took up in our youth, against this Man and that Party, may in time, and by the use of proper Means, be worn out and forgot; were it not for those deprav'd Passions and Affections which we suck'd in with our Mother's Milk. It's no such mighty matter to doubt, whether we perfectly understand the Sentiments of our Adversary; but it's very difficult, not to have an ill Opinion of him, whom we have been long us'd to censure and mistake. 'Tis also a very easy matter to give others excellent Advice, and use many undeniable Arguments effectually to persuade 'em not to give way to their Passions, in Disputations and Debates; but to argue calmly, like Men and Philosophers. Yet, alas! when all is said, You, and I, and every one else, must needs own, that it's much easier to give good Advice, than to take it: And that of Scholars especially, he wou'd be a great and happy Man indeed, if it were lawful to call him a Man, who cou'd live in a perfect Conformity with his own Precepts.

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**Chap. 9.** As the Difficulty mention'd increases Controversys amongst some People; so it ought to render 'em suspected by those who study to *know themselves*, as much as to find out the Disposition and Sentiments of *others*. They shou'd not easily confide in their own judgments, especially when it inclines 'em to give the worst Interpretation they can of their Adversary; as knowing it generally proceeds from a vicious Cause. And here let us be persuaded to take great care, that we don't wickedly charge the Ill-will, Hatred, and Malice we discover against the Erroneous, on our *Love of Truth*. Such People as are guilty in this respect, talk as if they did not know what Love and Hatred mean. Can I be reasonably angry, and persecute another with bitter Words and cruel Usage, because he does not possess some good thing which I do? If too great a Love of our selves and Opinions do sometimes clash with the Love we ought to have for those who dissent from us; wherever the Love of Truth is, that is not repugnant to a Love and Esteem for those who in our judgments are erroneous. For, from a pure sincere Love of Truth springs a loving Compassion for the Erroneous. And in this Compassion consists that Zeal which so well becomes Christians.

But, I am afraid lest all, that has or can be said, shou'd prove ineffectual for our Cure. Every one ought to take pains to inform and regulate his own Mind and Affections. This being the most difficult and laborious Undertaking in the World, we shou'd earnestly beg Help of him, who searches into all things, even  
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*the deep and hidden Things of God; in whose* Chap. 9.  
*Power and at whose Command are the Hearts of*  
*all Men, which he turns, guides and directs,*  
*as the Rivers of Water, wheresoever he pleases.*  
For, if in any thing we want the Assistance  
of the Infinitely Wise and Almighty God;  
we have certainly a Necessity for it, to aid and  
direct us in our Endeavours after the true  
Knowledge, and right Government of our  
selves.

4. If our Adversary, against whom we dispute, assures us that we do him an Injury in ascribing to him an Opinion which he detests and disowns, and which is not the Consequence of any of his Doctrines: We ought not to be backward in owning it probable, that we might misunderstand and misrepresent both him and his Opinions. "But, pray Sir, says one, if I am oblig'd to confess my self in an Error, and that I was a mere Trifler about Words; to make my Recantation of one part of one Book, and another part of another: what will my Friends, Followers, and Admirers say of me? Don't pretend to persuade me to what is so contrary to my Honour. I'll sooner hearken to you in any thing than this." Now I'll appeal to my Reader, whether this be not ridiculous. For, others see what we won't own, but endeavour to hide and conceal. We are like Children, who wink hard, and then think no body else can see 'em. We may be well assur'd, that others don't only see we have err'd, but that, by reason of an unmanly, mean-spirited Shame, we persevere in our Error. They see (and sure-



Chap. 9. ly not without just Scorn and Contempt of us) that we stubbornly persist in an Error, lest we shou'd own our selves to have been in one; or, which is all one, lest we shou'd be forc'd to acknowledg our selves *Men*. If we wou'd ingenuously confess, that we did not rightly and thorowly understand the Mind of the Author with whom we disputed, no body wou'd have the least reason to upbraid us. For, are not the Authors themselves better Interpreters of their own Words than we can pretend to be? The wisest Men are often (not to say daily) deceiv'd with Words misunderstood. And it's a true and certain Character, not only of an honest, but of a great and heroick Soul, and sincere Lover of Truth, to be so much a Master of himself, as to dare own himself in an Error, in contempt and spite of all the ridiculous Mockery and Drolls of the Vulgar. Since all Men err, they who dare not own it, are either blind, or such poor-spirited Wretches, whose great and only Concern is, *What will People say of us?* All their Hopes and Fears are terminated in the Smiles and Frowns of the Mob. To these they have given their Books as Pledges, that they will not, with St. *Abstin*, make any Recantations: but, if encourag'd with their Favour, will defend their Errors to their Lives end.

But here a Question may very properly be ask'd, *Whether we may never charge a Man with an Opinion which he disowns?* I say, in answer to this, we may, *when the other's Protestation is manifestly contrary to Fact*. For, 'tis in vain for any to deny in Words what is plainly

plainly evident by their daily Practice. But, Chap. 9.  
in all other Cases, we ought to act with the  
greatest Caution. If the Words of an Au-  
thor, consider'd with the utmost Care and  
Diligence, without any Passion or Prejudice,  
will fairly admit of no other Sense than that  
in which we understand 'em: If, again, our  
Adversary be a great Master of Propriety of  
Expression, and spoke (not in the confus'd  
Hurry of a Disputation, but) deliberately;  
advisedly, upon Premeditation, when his  
Mind was calm and serene, and free from tu-  
multuous, disturbing Passions: If, in the last  
place, there be a manifestly apparent Cause,  
why he shou'd dissemble or conceal his Opi-  
nion; as the Hopes of Preferment, or the  
Fear of losing it; or any other like Con-  
sideration: When these three Circumstances  
concur, we may oftentimes, without breach  
of Charity, ascribe an Opinion to a Man  
which he professedly disowns. But when  
these Circumstances do not most evidently  
concur; it's the best way to let every one in-  
terpret his own Words, that we may attri-  
bute no Opinions to another, but what he  
acknowledges and professes. Besides, it be-  
comes Men and Christians to believe, rather  
that Mens Words are unapt, improper, or  
indeed absurd; than that their Sentiments  
are irreligious and profane. It seems too a  
Confirmation of the Truth, that they who  
speak differently about it, may yet on both  
sides be very Orthodox, and their Sentiments  
carefully examin'd, may be found to be very  
agreeable and consistent.

Chap. 9. Another Question is, *Whether we may not ascribe to a Man an Opinion, which indeed he does not expressly own or maintain; but which is a necessary Consequence of the main Opinion he contends for.* We ascribe to the most wise God, not only what is in so many words said in the Text, but whatsoever is a certain Consequence of it: For, he who sees all Things, sees that also. So in Men of Judgment and Accuracy, the most remote Consequences of their Doctrine are reckon'd as much theirs, as their profess'd Opinions. For, these quicksighted Men discern things more connected and link'd together with their Doctrine, than they can who are more stupid, insensible and dull. But indeed the Subtilty of the most accurate is not to be boasted of over-much; and besides, their Minds are so entangled and perplex'd with Passions and Prejudices, that they can't use the Edg of their Understanding, which is naturally dull'd and blunted, to the best advantage. And then as for *Consequences* which are real and necessary, some are very near, and therefore easy to be discern'd; others are more remote from their *first Antecedent*, to which we can't come but by other Consequences, and sometimes by a very long Train of 'em. These things first consider'd, we thus answer the Question. No Proposition ought to be ascrib'd to a Man which he does not assert; no body asserts that which he does not see to be the Consequence of his Words. Hence it follows, that none ought to be charg'd with Consequences, however necessary, which he did not perceive to be such.

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A Man can't be said to believe all things which may fairly be infer'd from his Doctrine, for he mayn't see nor know half of 'em. Chap. 2

A Tenet, whose Deductions and Inferences are false, is it self necessarily false. But, as he who speaks a Truth, does not speak all Truths consequent to it; (for then all the Theorems, and Problems found out by our modern Mathematicians, must be ascrib'd to those who knew, or who invented the Axioms, Definitions, and *Postulata*) so he who says any thing that's false, is not guilty of saying or believing all the Falshood which may necessarily be infer'd from his Doctrine.

If it be certain and evident, that a Man does not see some Consequences deducible from what he has asserted; those Consequences can't justly be charg'd upon him. That he may not see 'em, is certain, both from some of his other Opinions, which are contradictory and repugnant to 'em, and from his own Practice which is not agreeable to the Tenor of 'em.

If it be certain, either from his Words or Practice, that he *does see* the Consequence of his Opinions; the Consequence is justly laid to his Charge. And it's probable, that some shou'd see the Consequences of their Doctrines sooner than others: as a sharp acute Man, sooner than a dull stupid Man; a Man who is free from Prejudices and Passions, than he who is quite blinded with 'em. And certainly it's more easy to discern a Consequence that's near, and therefore easy, than another more remote and farther out of sight. In judging of probable Consequences we must be

charitable, and ought to interpret every thing in the best Sense we fairly can. In uncertain and doubtful Matters, it's best totally to suspend our Judgment, especially when we are in danger of wronging others, by ascribing to 'em Opinions, which are none of theirs. What ought to make us cautious, is, that tho' the absurd Consequences of our Adversarys Opinions be justly and necessarily drawn from 'em; yet, that there's a great difference between them and us, and a great Allowance to be made in their favour. For, like fond Lovers, they can't spy the Faults of their Mistress, their darling Opinions; but blind themselves and others with some dark Distinction, which neither they nor any other Mortal understand. All we have to do, with relation to fallacious Consequences, Consequences not of an Opinion, but of (those worst of *Sophisters*) our Hatred or Envy, is to take great care, that we nicely distinguish 'em from those which, after a strict and impartial Examination, we know to be just. But to return.

5. Another no ways contemptible Cure of contending about Words wou'd be, *carefully to examine all our Words, when we are out of the Heat of Disputation*: Whether this or that Word be not a mere empty Sound, without Sense or Signification, which we only think we understand; or, Whether the Idea signify'd by it be clear and distinct, or of a confus'd and general Signification: Whether such a Word signify the Thing it self or its Mode; a thing without us, or some Sensation or Perception within us. Let us endeavour

your to give clear Definitions of Things, signify'd by the Words which we commonly use. This wou'd make a great alteration in our controversial Writings, if it did not totally suppress 'em. Chap. 9.

Thus much may serve to direct us how to cure our selves of the great Evil of contending about Words. We shall now speak of the Cure of it in others. And, our first Enquiry shall be, What's to be done, when Triflers about Words oppose us, or rather our bare Words, for no other reason than because, as we imagine, they do not apprehend their meaning. Why, the first thing we have to do is to enquire, whether we be in fault for not explaining our selves clearly and intelligibly; or our Adversary for not taking pains, or not being willing rightly to understand what we have so clearly propos'd, and presented to their view: Whether we don't sometimes use perplex'd, obscure, and ambiguous Words. If we do, we wou'd do well in the first place, *To own and confess the Impropriety of our Expressions*; and then, *To promise, and to perform those our Promises, of taking the utmost Care for the future to speak so as to be understood*. But what, say you, must I begin again to learn to speak? Yes, if you can't speak intelligibly. But this most People disdain, as dishonourable to 'em. What mistaken Mortals are we! We never are really and indeed more silly, than when we affect to appear most wise; and betray the greatest Folly in being resolv'd to confess our selves guilty of none, even the least and most inconsiderable Error. If the two Rules mention'd

**Chap. 9.** tion'd be not so delightfom to the Practice; must nothing be done for the sake of the Peace and Tranquillity of our selves and others?

*Some call my Precepts hard;<sup>1</sup> they're hard indeed:*

*But bitter Pills are us'd in time of need.*

If our Words are not justly exceptionable, yet if we have others equally clear, let us for our Neighbour's sake omit the former, and use the latter. The most apt Words are not of that Consequence, as to be unnecessarily retain'd to the loss of Peace. The Design and Business of our Words is to convey our Thoughts to others. When they don't faithfully discharge their Duty, but are apt to misrepresent us to our Neighbours and Acquaintance; our best way is to dismiss 'em as (if not downright evil, yet) unprofitable Servants: we having others within call, who will better supply their places at present.

But, this can't be done always; we can't have an equal regard to every one, and speak or write to every one's Capacity, and way of taking and apprehending Things. It's a hard matter to find out Words proper and futable to the Purpose; but much more difficult to speak so clearly, as not to be misinterpreted and misunderstood. But, we must do what is to be done; and if we have no other better Words to substitute in the room of those which we have us'd, let's endeavour to interpret 'em so clearly, that the most stupid *may* understand 'em if they will,  
and

and that the most spiteful and censorious be Chap. 9.  
compel'd to it.

But pray take care you don't mention a word of the Dullness or perverse Understanding of him whom you have under Cure. Don't object to him, that *he disputes about what he does not understand: That he does not dispute fairly, but cavils, calumniates, and tells Stories that have not the least Foundation of Truth.* Such Methods (be what you say ever so true) may serve to provoke 'em against the Truth, but will certainly never bring 'em to the Knowledge and Love of it. Let your Words be soft and obliging, when your Arguments are hard as Flints, and immovable as Rocks.

Wou'd you have your Adversary acknowledge that he oppos'd what he did not understand? Transfer the Fault, as far as you can, upon your self, or on the Language you write in; how barren it is of significant and expressive Words: Desire your Antagonist to supply your Defects, and give a candid Interpretation of your meaning. Rather say that you was not eloquent, or happy enough in expressing your self, than that he wanted Accuracy to apprehend and understand you. By acting after this manner, it's ten to one but you bring him to a due, moderate, and calm Temper.

If you change a Word for your Adversary's sake, don't say, *I abstain from this or that Word, because it's displeasing to you.* This wou'd make the Logomachy incurable, for nobody wou'd be thought to contend about Words. Rather own your self to be *too little curious in the Choice of your Words;* but, that  
this



Chap. 9. this Fault shall be rectify'd for the future.

If there be any, as there are too many, who think you can't change your Words, without altering your Opinions; bear with their Error, they can't hurt nor disgrace you.

Be neither obstinate, nor too obsequious towards your Adversarys; and let 'em clearly discern that you have not the least design to trick or delude 'em: That you are a sincere Lover of Peace and Truth, the Reputation and Advancement of which is the great Design and End of all your Writings.

But, what are we to do, when we see two Persons eagerly contending, and earnestly disputing, who yet are really of the same Mind, and have the same Sentiments? I answer, that for the most part it's the safest way to let 'em alone; let 'em fight it out, lest if you offer to part 'em, you get a broken Head for your pains, (this is no new, unheard of thing) and make 'em both your Enemies. The reason why learned Men are so quarrelsome, and angry at all Opposition to their Tenets, is this, they can't endure that any shou'd be accounted wiser than themselves. They therefore who endeavour to reconcile 'em, and to shew 'em the Agreement, Consistency and Harmony of their Principles, seem to take too much upon 'em, and to reckon themselves wiser than the angry Disputants. This is intolerable. They both, for the present, disengage one another, and fall upon the poor Reconciler with their joint Forces, and all the Rage imaginable. And yet if we must direct a Stranger in his way; if a Blessing shall attend the Peace-makers, we must

must sometimes venture on such ungrateful Chap.9.  
Offices; but it shou'd be done with Prudence  
and Caution. We must carefully avoid giving  
the Disputants any just reason to suspect,  
that our Ambition is only to out-shine 'em,  
or that we affect a Magisterial Authority over  
'em, and wou'd have our Words pass for Ora-  
cles. Let all our Words and Writings be  
truly modest, and be signaliz'd with indelible  
Marks of an inestimable Value for Peace  
and Concord. This can't be enough inculca-  
ted: for it's seldom, if ever, known that we  
do any remarkable Good, upon those whom  
we take all the Methods we can to affront  
and provoke, or whom we slight and laugh  
to Scorn. Laughing at Logomachys may  
prevent 'em, but will never cure 'em.

If we be minded to reconcile two Dispu-  
tants, what Necessity is there of doing it pro-  
fessedly? Perhaps, Reader, you may think  
me a Trifler; but I'll shew you the Method  
I shou'd follow. *Cains* and *Titius* dispute, and  
disagree not really and about Things them-  
selves, but mostly about Words, and the dif-  
ferent Ways they have to express themselves  
by. In the first place, go to *Cains* and re-  
quire a true and full Account of his Opinion,  
as far as it disagrees from that of *Titius*.  
Cause him to explain the Words and Expres-  
sions which occasion the Controversy, till he  
is clear from all Ambiguity. Then repeat  
and go over his Opinion in as plain Words  
as are to be had, and ask him, whether you  
rightly apprehend and represent it. If he  
says, *Yes*; write all down, and read what  
you

**Chap. 9.** you have written to him, if he approve it : give him Thanks for the pains he has taken in informing you ; and go to *Turin*, and serve him in like manner. And when you have obtain'd both their Opinions clearly and particularly explain'd, shew 'em to the Disputants, and 'tis much if you don't bring 'em nearer to a Reconciliation;

When you go about to reconcile two Disputants, don't make a Bluster and a Noise about it in the Title Pages, but quietly mark and clearly explain the Points on which the Controversy turns, and shew wherein they agree, and in what they really and truly differ. Produce the Words which contain the Points about which they differ : Consider with care their Force and Significancy ; take an accurate and careful View of all the Senses in which they are commonly us'd, or which they will fairly admit of ; especially those two in which the Disputants use 'em. When you have found the Sense of the Author, produce and describe it in very plain easy Words. Demonstrate it to be genuine by its Antecedents and Consequences, the Scope, Design, and very Words of the Author ; and bring your Proofs, that in these things they have the same Opinions, but in those their Sentiments are really different.

If you see no difference between two Disputants, don't presently affirm that there's none. You can't see it : leave it then to the Examination of those who are more acute, and in the mean time restrain your self from judging one way or t'other.

Such

Such a Method I wou'd take with Contenders about Words, not perhaps that it is the best which can be pitch'd upon; but because even this shews that Art, Dexterity, and good Management is requir'd in those who wou'd cure Men of their Errors and Weaknesses, instead of irritating and provoking 'em, and making 'em out of love with Truth. They who have found out a more effectual Method, are at liberty to make use of it.

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## C H A P.

## C H A P. X.

*Preservatives against Contentions about Words.*

**W**HAT Arms we shou'd use to guard against Logomachys, we clearly intimated when we treated of the Causes of Contentions about Words, especially those which are internal; for beware of the *Cause*, and 'tis odds on your side that you avoid the *Effect*. But because this can't be too much inculcated, I shall yet more particularly consider what we ought to observe in proposing and explaining our own Opinions, and in examining those of others. We teach by word of mouth, or by writing; let our great Concern be, not to teach Words, but Things. Let Tutors be careful that their Pupils take not up with Words, nor be contented with knowing the outside of Things, but accustom themselves to search diligently after the Nature and Propertys of the Things themselves: 'Tis not being able to repeat a parcel of Words readily and without hesitation, will change raw Boys into Learned Men; all the advantage they get by it, if any, is, that they please their *Padagogues* by it. Oh, there's my brave Boy! in a little time you'll be fit for *Oxford*, Child; when all this while here is no Exercise of his Judgment and natural Reason;

Reason; there's little he can do, but what you may teach a Parrot to do.

Let every one think as he pleases: I confess I reckon him the better Scholar, who can make shift to give a tolerable account of one Thing which he does understand, than he who can very readily repeat ten which he does not. I vastly prefer Boys who can hardly find Words to express their Thoughts by, before those who have a Set of Words at their Fingers ends; but ask them the meaning of them, and truly they know very little, if any thing, of the matter. I wou'd for this reason have Children taught nothing above the reach of their Understanding; as many things in Grammar, Logick and Rhetorick are: Some easy things perhaps may be taught them in every of these Arts; but a whole System will never be understood by them, being more suted to the Understanding of those of riper Years. *Logick* and *Rhetorick* are, says my Lord *Bacon*, Arts of Arts; one serves to inform and enlighten our Judgment, the other to beautify, brighten and adorn our Stile. *Logick* and *Rhetorick* repeated, and not understood, is like the *Echo*, it's nothing but mere Sound: Young Men thus taught are generally earnest Contenders about Words and Terms of Art, vainly imagining that the very *Quintessence* of Knowledge is all contain'd in their insignificant Words, for which they are as zealous, as for Liberty, Property, or Life it self.

A good Method to preserve our Youth from the love of contending about Words is, by all means to discourage in them the love

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of

Chap. 10 of *contradicting* others on every occasion.

They who talk much are said to be apt to lye; so they who contradict every one they are in company with, are apt to prate very foolishly, merely about Words, and they know not what. People bred in Schools and at Universitys are generally observ'd to be more guilty of this Folly, even in Civil Affairs and ordinary Conversation, than others; which renders them in Company very disagreeable, troublesome and ridiculous. I must needs own the Charge is too true of the greater part of Learned Men, especially such as have been bred in Cloysters and Colleges. Tutors shou'd make it their great Care, that the Advantages we meet with in Schools and Colleges be so improv'd, as to outweigh the Inconveniencies we are there expos'd and liable to: Let Young Men be instructed, not only to oppose or defend an Opinion; but to be impartial, patient, modest, attentive, and willing to be inform'd; to yield a ready Assent to the Truth, to compare their own Sentiments with those of others, and chuse that which they think more agreeable to the Truth. Let them be caution'd not to judg this Man in the right, because he holds out longest, or has the last Word; as if they were like Men at Tennis, where he who strikes the Ball last is reckon'd the best Gamester. Other Exercises too might be found out for them besides Disputations: Let them be accustom'd to search after deep and hidden Truths, to solve knotty Difficulties, to judg accurately, and to describe clearly and elegantly every thing that's newly brought up-  
on

on the Stage, and is really worth their Con-  
sideration: Let them be used to meditate, Chap. 10.  
to be studious and attentive; to proceed in  
a plain, natural Method, from Things known  
to Things unknown; and to deduce and in-  
fer what they learn from certain Principles:  
Teach them to distinguish Certainities from  
Uncertainties; what's evident and certain,  
from that which is only probable; and what  
is more probable, from that which is less:  
Often remember them to reflect on their Ig-  
norance in this and t'other Point, that they  
may see Reason to distrust and suspend their  
Judgment in many Cases, and not to be over-  
forward in giving their Assent to an Opinion,  
and even to be more backward in condemning  
one: Let them be exercis'd in those Sciences  
where there's no room for Disputation, as  
in Arithmetical and Geometrical Demonstra-  
tions, than which nothing is more likely to  
bring them off from the Consideration and  
Admiration of Words to that of Things.  
These Sciences alone are perfectly clear of all  
such Words as signify nothing: Here we can't  
well mistake Words for Things; we are not  
obliged to make these Sciences the main Stu-  
dy of our Lives; but certainly it's of great  
advantage to us, if it be not necessary, to  
have some acquaintance with them for the  
Service they do us, in shewing us what 'tis  
*to know*, and what 'tis *not to know*; when we  
are Masters of Words only, and when we  
have a right understanding of the Things  
themselves.

We come now to shew how Books are to  
be written, so as to give no occasion of



Chap. 10 Contending about Words; and the first Direction is, *Be sure that you your self perfectly understand what you write.* First consider what your Sentiments are, what Judgment you have pass'd concerning this or that Particular; and then whether it seem certain and undeniable, or only probable. Do you find your Assent to the Truth of this or that Proposition extorted from you by its unquestionable Evidence, or do you find it in your power to suspend your Assent? And in the last place you are to consider why you think thus or otherwise, what Arguments you have for so doing; whether 'tis because the Opinion pleases you, or that 'tis advantageous, pleasant, or for your Reputation to believe it; whether 'tis because it's a receiv'd, popular Opinion; or on the other hand, imagin'd to be above the apprehension of the Vulgar. If you have Arguments for your Opinion, you are to examine them, whether they conclude necessarily or contingently; whether they be more or less probable; and whether what you infer from them be unquestionably true, or you have only grounds barely to conjecture it to be so.

When you have well consider'd all these matters, then commit your Opinion to writing, and labour to propose and explain it so clearly, that the attentive Reader may with the greatest Ease understand, *what your Sentiments are; in what Sense, under what Limitations, and with what Exceptions you acknowledge them yours, and the Reasons why you think they are just and true.* Let there be undeniable Indications of Ingenuity and Candor in all

all your Writings, and always aim at Clear-  
ness in expressing your self: Bring the Reader to an understanding of your Opinion by the same way, the same train of Arguments and Method of thinking, by which you was brought to the Belief of it your self: Be inquisitive after the most significant Words, such as will make the most lasting Impression on the Minds of the Reader; and see that by no hard Words, nor confus'd Method, you perplex and tire him: Be persuaded of this Truth, that People may talk too rhetorically, with too much subtilty, too sublimely, too copiously, too briefly, too quaintly; but never too clearly: Look upon your self as writing not only for the Learned and Ingenious, but for the Ignorant and Dull; for Readers who will not be attentive, who will read you with Prejudice; who, if they can't espy Faults in your Writings, will, with the help of a good Invention, make them, or at least fancy and affirm them to be there; and who wou'd be better pleas'd to find one Error in your Writings than twenty Truths. If you advance any thing that's new, if you are not exceedingly modest, many of your Readers will reckon you insult them; and if you are not plain and clear, they'll soon make you an Heretick or Blasphemer. You must in this Case be more than ordinarily nice in explaining your Opinion, and considering your Words and Expressions, in order to prevent every the least Ambiguity from hiding it self under them. If Words in themselves ambiguous must be us'd, fix their Signification by some *Nominal* Definition, and

**Chap. 10** never (without necessity, which will sometimes happen) use Words in another Sense than they are us'd by the Vulgar; when you do, let us have notice of it, and tell us as plainly as you can, what Signification you put upon them.

If you are compel'd to use many doubtful ambiguous Words in a Book, or to use any in an unusual Signification, put them all together in an Index, with accurate Definitions annex'd to them; and in the Book it self, 'twou'd be an advantage to the Reader, to have them mark'd or printed in a different Character. The Lexicon we spoke of before wou'd be here also of great Use, if one cou'd be made wherein all Words us'd by the Learned shou'd have one particular, clear, proper Definition or Explication, in which they shou'd all be obliged to acquiesce. That this is a Work no ways impossible or impracticable, the Mathematicians have given us full Demonstration: for what has been done may be done; and why what may be effected in one Science mayn't in another, I can by no means apprehend.

How Books may be so *written* as not to give the least occasion to Contending about Words, has been consider'd; we come now to examine how they are to be *read* without danger, and there are two things which are requir'd of all Readers before they peruse a Page: These are, a Desire, and an Ability or Capacity to understand the Author. By a Desire of understanding him, I mean an impartial, just and constant Inclination to ascribe to every man his own, avow'd, profess'd

Chap. 10  
fess'd Opinions, and none else. We ought to act by others as we wou'd desire they shou'd act by us; and certainly there's no man living but thinks it an intolerable Injury, to be represented as holding absurd or impious Opinions, when he really does not believe one Syllable of them. What an unmanly, pitiful, base Action wou'd the Defamer be guilty of! Wou'd it be any breach of Charity or good Manners, to post such a man for a malicious, envious, perfidious Villain? But let us take care that by condemning others we don't condemn our selves also, or (like *Menius* in the Satyr) forgive our selves those things which we reckon unpardonable in others. And then in the next place, we shall be able to pick out the Sense of an Author, when we read nothing but what's within the Compass of our Understanding; what's futed and agreeable to our Age, Genius, Learning, Education and Experience; and especially when we bring along with us a Mind free from deprav'd Passions and Prejudices, and whose love for Truth prevails with it upon all occasions, more than any other Consideration in the world. I may have a very delicate relish of Wine which was never in my Cellar; and why mayn't I be alike affected with the Truth in what Book soever I find it, let it be antient or modern, or written by Friend or Foe?

Submit not your Reason to the Authority of other Men. If we believe with the Vulgar, we shall all believe alike: If we must

Chap. 10 believe as the wise and learned believe, let us first of all consider, whether we have Skill enough to make a right judgment concerning other mens Wisdom, or no: If we have, we don't do well to submit blindly to their Determinations, since it's far easier to judge concerning the Truth of an Opinion, than of the Strength and Soundness of another man's Intellectuals. If we be not sufficiently qualify'd to judge of other People's Profoundness, we are silly in giving up our Minds to the Conduct of those, who, for any thing we know, may be as great Fools, and as often mistaken as our selves.

In reading Books let our constant Practice be to embrace Truth wherever we find it; to reject nothing but what's apparently false, and to suspend our Assent to things doubtful and uncertain.

Whilst we are actually reading Books, two Things are requir'd of us, that we be *attentive* and *cautious*: Attentive, not to the Sound of the Words, but to their Sense and the Scope of the Author; to the Significancy and Energy of the Words he uses; to what goes before and what follows after, and to other Opinions of the same Author. Let him distinguish what's manifest from what's obscure, in order to explain and interpret the latter by the former: His business is to consider the Connexion between his Principles and Hypotheses, the Strength of the Arguments and Reasons he makes use of to support his Opinions; and many other things, not easily enumerated, which restrain and limit Words of a more universal and general Signification:

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Let


Let him consult Divines, Lawyers and Logicians, and observe the Rules they prescribe for our right understanding and interpreting an Author. Chap. 10

But we must not only be attentive Readers, but, if we wou'd avoid Logomachys, be cautious and circumspect: We have to do with Words which are very uncertain, and often deceive both Author and Reader; the latter very often, and especially when he has a mind to fix an Absurdity on the former. Self-love easily persuades us to believe others in an Error; so that with many it's a very agreeable, as well as (in their Opinion) a reputable Employment, to shew themselves capable of censuring and finding fault; when we shou'd rather imitate Strangers in foreign Countries, whose Wisdom it is not to be over-credulous, especially in matters which concern other People's Reputation. 'Tis a

wise Caution of *Macchiavel*, That when we see an Enemy acting seemingly contrary to the allow'd and establish'd Rules of Policy, we shou'd suspect, and immediately be upon our guard against Tricks and Stratagems. Lib. 3. de  
Repub. c.  
46.

And was it never known that an Author has render'd himself ridiculous, by endeavouring to expose his Adversary as guilty of an Absurdity which cou'd not justly be fixt upon him? Before we charge any with an Absurdity, we shou'd first find out what 'twas that deceiv'd him; by what train of Thoughts or false Principles he was led into such an awkward, nonsensical Error; how far he went right on in his way, and what false appearances of Truth caus'd him to wander out of it,

Thus

**Chap. 10** Thus much concerning Logomachys, or  
 Contentions about Words. Men might easily cure themselves of, and preserve themselves from so fatal and pernicious an Evil, if they were but willing: The Means and Method of their Cure I have as plainly as I can laid down before them, and have encourag'd them to the use of them. They who are not only unwilling to be recover'd to a good state of mind themselves, but do what they can to corrupt and infect others, are Gentlemen who are not to be prevail'd with by Persons so obscure and of so little Reputation, as those of my Rank and Character. All that I shall say, either of them, or those *Contentions about Words* of which they are so fond, is, That they are such irreconcilable Enemies to Peace and Truth, that I can't, in my Opinion, conclude better than with my Advice and earnest Request to all who love and are ambitious to promote *these*, to keep at as great a distance from the *other*, as human frailty will allow.

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A  
DISCOURSE  
OF THE  
Meteors of Stile.

**N**OT to deceive the Reader with a doubtful Expression, by the *Meteors of Stile* is meant *Phrases, which seem to be sublime, but are indeed trifling and vicious.* The Term is borrow'd from *Longinus* the Rhetorician, who by *ὕψιλα Orationis*, understands a Diction truly sublime, and by *μετώρα*, one which has only a vain appearance of Elevation. At first it signify'd the same as *ὕψιλον*, but it has had the like misfortune as some other words, the abuse of it has diverted it into a bad Sense: for Pedants, who were ostentatious of their Philosophy and Eloquence, were, on every occasion, talking of the Meteors of the Sky, and garnishing their Harangues with that Figure; and therefore at length they had a Name impos'd on them from it, and were call'd \* *μετεωρολογαί*, which, if we be- \* *Hesych. lieve in Voce.*



lieve *Hesychius*, denotes *those who are ever talking of the Meteors of the Sky*. And hence the word has always imply'd something of Reproach; and not only the Pretending and Vain-glorious were signify'd by *μετεωρολογοι*, but all vicious Sublimity in Stile was also call'd *μετώα*: as from the Abuse of the word *Phoebus*, a Man who makes extravagant Flights in a Discourse, is said in *French*, *parler Phoebus*.

To understand what is a Meteor in Stile, 'tis necessary that we understand what is true Sublimity, which is therefore first to be explain'd. I will not determine whether the *Π* of *Longinus*, and the *μ* of *Hermogenes*, are the same, as many have thought; or whether there is a Difference between them, as *Tanaquil Faber* was of Opinion, and the ingenious Translator of *Longinus* in *French*, *Monsieur Boileau*. 'Tis at every man's Pleasure to judg, as he sees fit: for I am not going to construe Rhetoricians Terms, but to give Precepts of Stile.

To a Great and a Sublime Stile, by which I mean the same thing, 'tis requir'd, First, that the Subject it self be great and sublime. Some things are more valu'd, among Men, and others less: the former, being more esteem'd, are call'd the Greater; and those, which are regarded in an inferior degree, the Less: and such as excel among the first are term'd, in an eminent manner, *sublime*, and produce Admiration in us; as those which are little, move our Contempt.

All those things therefore are great and sublime, which we admire for excelling among them, to which Mankind give the Preference:

ference: Thus Kings are great, because they are of a distinguish'd Rank among Men of Dignity and Figure, and they are still greater who excel among Kings; and he is greatest who is King of Kings, and Lord of Lords: and upon the same account *Actions* and *Things* are also call'd Great.

Nor are only those things great which are good, but also the bad, because they beget Admiration by excelling in their Kind: Thus we say, great Cruelty, great Villany, great Misery, and the like. And these things generally impress us more strongly, and appear greater to us than those which excel in Goodness; for they raise the Passions of Anger, Indignation, Fear, Sorrow, Terror and Despair, which are apt to magnify an Object, because these Affections are as much more violent in Men, than those which relate to Good; as shunning of Evil is a more vehement Principle than the Pursuit of Good. Hence it is, that proud arbitrary Princes chuse rather to be fear'd than lov'd; because Men sometimes love things, tho they are small and inconsiderable, but they seldom fear any thing but what is great: and Love is frequently not far remov'd from Contempt, whereas we despise nothing less than what we are much afraid of. And so Persons of this Taste had rather seem Great than Good; for the Appellation of Good is to many preposterously accompany'd with a certain notion of Meanness and Diminution.

Now it is not always necessary that an O-rator's Subject shou'd be great in the Judgment of Philosophers, or wise Men, who estimate

estimate not the Value of Things by the vulgar Standard: 'Tis sufficient if it is *great in the common Opinion of Mankind, or of those to whom we address our selves*. Thus a General, tho' above so base a Regard himself, may yet make a noble Speech to the Soldiers about Plunder, in order to animate them to Battle, by the Hope of Booty; and an Orator may declaim warmly on an Injury or Affront, as an important Matter, tho' *Socrates or Demogenes* wou'd have thought it a Trifle. But if a Thing, which is great in it self, shou'd not appear so to an Audience, we must first prove it such in a simpler Stile, and by force of Reason, rather than Magnificence of Words: And when by clear Tokens we perceive we have succeeded in this Point, then, and not before, we may raise our Stile into the Sublime, and give it a Majesty. For this reason, the Beginning of a Discourse ought to be plain and natural; because 'tis improper to speak pompously on a Subject, before we have made its Dignity to be understood, since a Hearer may have far meaner Thoughts of it than we.

But to select a lofty Subject, is not alone sufficient to render a Diction sublime; we must also have a Genius equal to the Argument, and be able to discern its several Beautys, and form an Idea of it, which shall comprehend all its Excellence.

This we may call a Capacity and Vigour of Imagination: That is a capacious Imagination, which can at once, or in a very short time, present to it self a Multitude of Things without Confusion, which surveys an illustrious

trious Subject on every side with wonderful Celerity, and examines it, and distinguishes what are the bright Parts of it, and to what it may properly be compar'd, or oppos'd.

The Force of Fancy consists, in giving such a lively Representation of all the Particulars to the Mind, as shall almost amount to Sense, and not raise a faint and distant Idea of the Thing, but make it seem, as it were, present to View. So that the bare Imagination shall produce the same Affections in us, as the actual Sight of it wou'd create.

This Force and Capacity of Fancy are particularly conspicuous in the Poets: the latter is seen in their forming their Images of so many Parts, and expressing so many Circumstances in them, that it is impossible to conceive how they cou'd all come into their Minds; and the former appears, when in reading their Writings, we don't so much seem to read, as to have the Things before our Eyes, and experience the same Transports as their Presence is wont to provoke. Both the Capacity and Vigour of Imagination must meet together, to make a great Idea of a Thing in the Mind: for if the first is wanting, the Stile will be dry and barren; and if the last, it will be languid and heavy. *Ovid* never wanted a capacious Imagination, he abounded in this; but a Force or Strength of Fancy is sometimes requir'd in him. Compare his *Dido*, and the *Dido* of *Virgil*; and in the one, you'll say, the Poet speaks, tho with a world of Elegance; but in the other you see *Dido* herself in all her Fury and Despair.

But

But Imagination is not the sole, nor the chief thing in a Style; the Judgment must preside over the whole, for \* good Sense and Understanding is the Foundation of writing well. If all that a hasty and luxuriant Fancy suggests, is not fit to pass in a Poem, how much greater Caution must be had in Prose, the Gravity of which allows far less Liberty to the Fancy?

Let the Judgment therefore govern the Imagination, and sometimes remit, and sometimes contract the Reins. To this end it must be clear and piercing thro every Part; it must be uncorrupt, not bias'd by a Fondness to its own Conceptions; and it must be severe and inexorable, not sparing any Impropriety of the Fancy. Then it must distinguish what is principally to be admir'd in an Idea, and what will impress most at such a Time and Place; whether it will be sufficient to propose those Parts which relate to the Grandeur of the Subject in general, or whether 'tis better to go over each of them separately; whether only the chief are to be singled out, or one alone, which is most eminent to be insisted on, and touch'd up with the brightest Colours: And whether that, on which we wou'd draw most Admiration, shou'd be conceal'd, but conceal'd in such a Manner as to make it look like something very important. Let the Imagination view and review its Idea on every side, till it pleases the Judgment, and a true Critick pronounces; *This*

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\* *Scribendi recte sapere est & Principium & Fons.*

*Hor. Arte Poet.*

*Part*

*Part of it is admirable, this is to be display'd to the Audience.*

After the Image of a noble Subject is finish'd in the Mind, and approv'd by the Judgment, the next care is concerning the Words, which are as it were the Colouring, that we paint it out to others; so that it may seem as lofty to them, as it does to us. *Words, therefore, shou'd be equal to the Image, and the Image to the Thing; and consequently in a sublime Stile, they shou'd also be sublime, which they are three ways; By the Authority of the Persons who use them, by their Sound, and by their Signification.*

Words are sublime by the Authority of such as use them, which are not taken from Places where the Rabble and baser People resort, but from the Conversation of Persons of good Breeding, and honourable Birth and Employment. A polite Taste will easily distinguish these in any Language, from those which are render'd coarse and fordid, by being in the Mouths of the Vulgar. When I speak of Words, I understand also the Phrases, call'd Proverbs, and the like.

Words are great in Sound, and Periods and Sentences (which have also a relation to the Sound of Words) if they fill the Ear, and are but just remov'd from oppressing it; like these in *Virgil, Venti ex Cavernis erumpunt; Æneid. 1. The Winds burst out of their Caverns: And these,*

*Crines effusa Sacerdos Æneid. 4.  
Tercentum tonat ore Deos, Erubumq; Chaosq;  
Tercentumque Hecatem.*

O

And

De Rapt.  
Proserp.

And those of *Claudian*, when he says, *Ceres*, upon the loss of her Daughter, *Toto bacchantur Olympo*. But of this the Ear must judge, which is more elegant in some than in others.

But the greatest Sublimity of Words consists in the *Signification*; for every man knows some are more significant than others, as in Latin, *amare* signifies more than *diligere*, *flagitare* than *petere*, *crumpere* than *evadere* (and in English to *loath* than to *dislike*, and to *shock* than to *move*, &c.) It conduces therefore to the Elevation of Style, not only to use Words which signify great Things, but also to select those which carry the fullest Sense. Thus; *Fury furnishes Arms*, is loftier than if the Poet had said *Anger* instead of *Fury*.

Besides the more known and the principal significations of any Word, there are innumerable others affix'd by common Use, which some call a *secondary Sense*. Thus if you cry out Thief upon a Man, you don't only say he has taken something from the Owner without his Consent, which is the principal meaning of the Word; but intimate a great deal more, as that you are angry at him, that you seek Vengeance on him, that you would seize him, and that you despise him so much as not to fear his Resentments: and sometimes the Word is us'd in Merriment, and does not imply a Crime.

There are few Words which have not a Variety of these Significations, which are to be observ'd in every sort of Style, and especially in the Sublime; not only that nothing may be signify'd by a Word contrary to what we design, but also that these Significations may

may serve to increase the Sublimity of the Discourse. How much did *Cesar* express in a single Word, when he appeas'd the mutinous Troops, by styling them *Quirites*? 'Tis Sueton. in vain to search a Dictionary for all the J. Casare, meanings of this Word, which the pronoun- S. 70. sing of it convey'd to the seditious Soldiers. Nay, I may affirm, that nothing imparts greater Majesty to a Discourse, than Words which have many Significations of this kind: For here a noble Sense lies conceal'd in few Words, and those the most simple, than which there cannot be any thing more sublime.

So *Valerius Poplicola*, the Assertor of the Roman Liberty, told the People, who were jealous of his affecting the Kingdom, because of the House he had built on Mount *Velia*;  
 " \* No, Fellow-Citizens, *Publius Valerius's*  
 " House shall not obstruct your Liberty;  
 " *Velia* shall not become dangerous to you.  
 " I will not only level my House to the  
 " Ground, but even place it beneath the  
 " Hill, that you may dwell above your sus-  
 " pected Countryman. Let them build up-  
 " on *Velia*, with whom you can better trust  
 " your Liberty, than with *P. Valerius*."

Here you may see what significancy a few Words may have; for strike out the Repetition of *P. Valerius's* Name, and those words,

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\* Non obstant Publii Valerii Edes Libertati vestrae, Quirites; tuta vobis erit Velia. Deferam non in planum modo Edes, sed Collis etiam subjiciam; ut vos supra suspectum me Civem habitetis. In Velia ædificent, quibus melius quam P. Valerio creditur Libertas. Livy, Decad. 1. lib. 2. c. 8.



*Your suspected Countryman,* and you will see how much of the Dignity of the Sentence is lost.

And what can be sublimer than that of *Cicero*; \* "The Senate knows this, the Consul sees it, and yet the Villain lives?" What an Energy is there in these words, *the Senate, the Consul*, pronounc'd in the Senate by *Cicero*, who was himself the Consul? And how much less had he express'd, if he had said, *You know this, and I see it*? And to this end were *Figures* invented, that at the same time as we declare a thing, we may also declare our Affections. Thus in the same Oration, when *Cicero* exclaims, *O Tempora! O Mores!* *Oh the Times and Manners!* he not only shows the Perverseness of the Age and Manners, but manifests also his wonderful Concern at the Depravity of both: and so other Figures express other Passions.

*Tropes* also, and especially *Metaphors*, heighten a Style, when justly employ'd; but they cannot find place in a sublime one, unless they are render'd necessary, either by the variety of the Discourse, or because the proper Words seem not fully to answer the Greatness of the Subject: tis then we are to borrow others, which are of a more lofty Sense. But in the Doctrine of the Tropes, too many convince the World they can play the Rhetorician.

Most Readers will think what has been already laid down, sufficient to Sublimity of Style; but one thing, in my Opinion, is still

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\* *Senatus hoc intelligit, Consul vidit, hic tamen vivit.* *Cicero, Orat. in Catilinam.*

behind, and which, for ought I know, may be the chief. An Orator not only paints out his Subject in his Oration, but also himself; for, as *Demetrius* truly says, *The Writer's Image* Lib. 1. cap. 1. is to be seen in every Word he uses. In the sublime Stile, therefore, we shou'd not only make the Subject; but even our Mind appear sublime; I say the Mind, not the Wit, which may sometimes be spritely and great, where the Mind is base and little.

He has a great and noble Mind; who is so wholly mov'd by Things which are important and great, as to be delighted only with them, and to regard them so entirely, as to despise those which meaner Minds esteem, as of no Consequence to him; who is of one Tenor in every Condition of Life, always Master of himself, true, sincere, open-hearted, and tenacious of the Right; and who so preserves his Dignity, as not to be overborn by Fear or Hope, or any other Perturbation, to commit an unworthy Action. Let an Orator paint himself thus, if he wou'd obtain a Majesty to his Speech,

And thus he will always draw himself thro' the whole Discourse, who does not labour it with a servile Diligence and Care, nor follow the trifling Rules of Rhetoricians, which is the Mark of a narrow Mind; but whose Eloquence shines with a masculine Vigour, and is simple and correct. This is to be found in him who speaks as he thinks, and who is more careful what he says, than how he says it; and who, in short, speaks well, not because he endeavours to do so, but because he cannot speak otherwise. Such a

Man

Man delivers himself with a certain noble Boldness and Liberty of Speech; and as he has nothing unmanner'd and rude, so he is far from a childish Bashfulness and Awe, and a fulsom and prostituted Flattery.

The Passions themselves, which in most Men are Signs of a weak and impotent Mind, will in such an one appear generous and brave; such is the Anger of *Neptune* in the first *Æneid* of *Virgil*, and the Tears of *Cicero* in his Oration for *Milo*.

Sentences dispers'd thro an Oration, also shew the Greatness of the Orator's Mind; but then they must seem to arise of themselves, while he is employ'd in prosecuting his Subject, and not to be stuck into it on purpose. 'Tis almost impossible for any Man to shew this Greatness of Mind, who is not really possess'd of it; if you strive to dissemble it, the Affectation it self, or some Metaphor taken from a mean and ordinary thing, or a pompous Figure employ'd on a plain and humble Argument, will discover that it is not in you. 'Tis in this *Livy* excels thro his whole History, and especially in the Speeches: for when you read them, you don't seem to read *Livy*, but to hear the Heroes and Conquerors themselves.

And hither are some Sayings of the Antients to be refer'd; *I scorn to steal a Victory*, said *Alexander*. If a Man were put to guess whose Saying this was, and were well acquainted with *Alexander's* Character, he wou'd name him for the Author. And who but *Alexander*, when *Parmenio* said, *I wou'd do this if I were Alexander*, wou'd have answer'd,

*And*

And I, if I were Parmenio : Thou carriest Cesar? How great a Thing does that signify, and also how great a Mind?

We have a Saying reported of a Duke of Genoa, who was forc'd to go into France, to submit himself, in the name of the Republick, to the French King. After they had shewn him all the Rarities and Splendor of Paris, they ask'd him, *What was the greatest Wonder he had seen in the most celebrated City and Court of the whole World?* He immediately reply'd, *My Self.* Nothing is wanting to the Sublimity of this Answer. Here is a perfect Image of an exalted Mind, and the noblest Thought express'd, by one plain, but most significant Word; there is an incredible Force in this Sublimity, and they who read, or hear such Sayings, perceive their Souls to grow elated at them, and generous Passions to beat within their Breasts.

By this Sublimity, that which otherwise wou'd provoke and enrage, serves only to beget Admiration, and Men are pleas'd even with an unfriendly and bitter Truth. *Alexander* is said to have given a Pirate his Life, for making this Return: *I am call'd a Pirate, because I infest the Seas with one poor Skiff; but you, who do the same thing with a numerous Fleet, are stil'd a King.* The Monarch was unwilling the Pirate shou'd exceed him in the Grandeur of Mind, which this Saying declar'd.

From what has been said, it appears how extraordinary a thing it is, not to strike out one sublime Saying or two, but to make a whole Discourse so. Briefly to comprise what

I have said; he who wou'd perform this, must form a great Idea from a noble Subject, and express also a Sublimity of Mind in Words so significant, as to transport a Man into an admiration both of that and his Subject. If the Difficulty of this shall deter any from attempting this sort of Stile, it will be a prudent part in them to forbear; since they may succeed happily in another. But in the Sublime very few write tolerably; here and there one and another excels, but all the rest, by endeavouring at it, only betray their Want of Judgment, or the Poverty of their Sense; and, as *Horace* says, *Dum Humum vitant, Nubes & Inania captant*; while they pursue Sublimity, they only write Fustian, and by soaring, catch nothing but an empty Cloud, a Meteor of Stile; which is the inseparable Consequence of injudiciously affecting to be sublime. But to proceed.

The *Meteors* of Stile may all be reduc'd under these three Heads: 1. When a Diction truly sublime is employ'd on a trivial Subject. 2. When the Subject is great, but the Stile is not truly so. 3. When neither the Subject, nor the Stile is truly sublime. The Cause of the first is, that either we estimate indifferent Things above their real Value, or else imagine we can't handle a Subject elegantly, unless we treat it magnificently: the former argues a little Mind, and both of them a Weakness of Judgment.

Examples of this Fault are innumerable. The *Literati*, when they speak of their own Works, generally assume too high a Tone, perhaps because they think too well of their own Per-

Performances. They bestow all the Figures of Stile, proper to express the most vehement Passions, to shew how such a Passage is to be read, what this or that Word signifies, or in what Method any Art is to be taught, &c. Julius Cesar Scaliger, a great Name in the learned World, having taught his Son Sylvius the Rudiments of the Latin Tongue, and going to instruct him more perfectly in the Language, speaks to him thus: Now you have pass'd thro the more Juvenile Part of Literature, it will not be proper for you to enter upon the graver Studys, till you know the Causes of those Precepts by which the Course of every excellent Science will be unfolded to you: For tho you have imbib'd these things, which are the Effect of exact Observations, yet because you may be often forc'd to doubt whether, and always why it is so, I cannot enjoy my self, unless I see you safely deliver'd from all these Difficulties. And a little after: Tho these things, my Son, may at first seem, to your Age, unpalatable and hard; yet I wou'd have you conclude with your self, that what is easy and vulgar, is not worth your Care. And how noble will it be for you to have been accusom'd to all the most excellent Things from your tenderest Years? Therefore these Hardships strike Terror and Despair only into barbarous and uncultivated Minds; but for us, who are Lovers of Truth, you must believe there are, as it were, arm'd Legions ready to assist us.

A Man wou'd swear Hamilcar were firing his Son Hannibal with an implacable Hatred to the Romans, or at least that our Julius Cesar were teaching his Sylvius, by what Valour and Conduct he shou'd recover the Principality of



## A Discourse of

of *Verona*, which he had lost ; and not that a Father was giving his Son the Rules of Grammar.

To this we may pertinently add *Ludovicus Vives's* \* Judgment concerning *C. Longolius* : He uses high-sounding and Ciceronian Words, says *Vives*, but this makes him appear the more solemn Trifler, because he adapts them to inconsiderable things ; for he was not content laboriously to imitate the Words and Phrases of *Cicero*, but he must needs copy him in every thing ; and the honest Gentleman, while he lay snug in a Corner of his Study, augustly assumes the Care of the chief Empire of the World, which was as ridiculous in him, as if he had put on a Giant's Clothes, and mimick'd his Port and Voice. This preposterous Sublimity never shew'd it self more, than in the Apology of this *Longolius* ; where he defends himself against the frivolous Cavils of his Adversarys so illustriously, that *Charles the First of England* cou'd not have imploy'd a greater Magnificence of Words when he was try'd for his Life. *Erasmus* has lash'd such Absurditys with his wonted Facetiousness.

In Ciceroniano.

And not only the Imitators of *Cicero*, but the whole Class of Copiers almost are guilty of the same Fault. You shall have the Stile of the greatest Men imitated ; by whom ? By obscure Fellows, lock'd up in a Chamber, and unknown to any but to Boys, or some of their own Degree. And so some harmless Creatures, who have only a little Common-Place Learning, shall imitate Debates of the deepest

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\* *L. Vives de conscribendis Epistolis.*

Statesmen,

Statesmen, on Matters of the last Consequence. An Imitator of *Livy*, whenever he is at a loss in the reading of a Sentence, shall speak just as if the *Roman* Army were embarrass'd at the *Furca Caudina*. If any one happens to innovate in the Method of teaching a Science, an Admirer of *Salust* shall borrow all the Colours, in which he has painted *Catiline*, to paint out the Infistence of such a Deed. He with whom *Tacitus* is a darling Author, in treating a Question or Topick of the Schools, shall speak sententiously, and utter himself with the Obscurity of an Oracle, that one wou'd think he was delivering the Arts of Government, and Secrets of State. A constant Reader of *Quintus Curtius* shall speak of the *Lucubrations* of the Learned, just as *Alexander* has of the Conquest of *Asia*. One shall apply all the Images, by which *Velleius Paterculus* has describ'd his Heroes, to any of his Acquaintance whom he has a mind to commend; and another shall relate the Squabbles of Grammarians, as pompously as *Florus* does the Wars of the *Romans*.

What, in the name of Wonder, can you desire? There is not a Village or Hamlet in any Quarter of the World, but these Imitators shall adorn it with all the Ensigns of Majesty that were in antient *Rome*; the *Forum*, the *Comitium*, *Rostra*, *Capitol*, *Sella Curules*, the *Fasces*, *Axes*, *Trabes*, *Ovations*, and *Triumphs*. They may say perhaps with *Tiryns* in *Virgil*,

*Urbum,*



*Urbem, quam dicunt Romam, Melibee putavi,  
Stultus ego, huic nostra similem.*

They are more ridiculous than the Fellow, who thus describes a paltry Rivulet : *It pours out with great Rapidity from the Taurick Mountains, and at length disembogues it self into the Sea ;* just as if he were speaking of the Torrent of Nilus or Euphrates.

Demetri-  
us, πρὸς  
ἐγκρίσεις.

Nay, which is enough to surprize any Man, our Romanizing Authors shall discover all the Roman Magistrates in their Formalitys and Robes, not only in any Civil State, but even in any Republick, as they call it, of Letters. To this honour'd Society Michael Fern thus dedicates Campanus's Poems : *To the \* perpetual Dictator, our Great Emperor, Pomponius Lætus, and to the Master of the Horse, and all the Republick of Letters, Michael Fern of Milan, one of the meanest Foragers, wishes a warm Fight, and a glorious Victory.* Of the same Tribe are they also who perpetually set out in an Oration with some celebrated Names of Antiquity, thus ; *Alexander the Great, Pyrrhus King of Epirus, Hannibal that Terror of Rome, Quintus Fabius, M. Marcellus, one the Shield, and the other the Sword of the Roman People, &c.* If a Person unread in History were to hear these Names so often

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\* Dictatori perpetuo, Imperatori nostro maximo, Pomponio Læto, Magistro Equitum, cunctæque Reipublicæ Literariæ, Michael Fernus Mediolanensis, vilis Pabulator, strenuam Pugnam, pulchram Victoriam,

repeated

repeated in the Academical Exercises; he might justly ask if they were all Doctors or Masters of Arts. This Abuse has render'd some of them so nauseous in \* France, that unless a Man has a mind to expose himself, he must not venture to mention *Cambyfes* or *Epaminondas* in an Oration; and if at any time 'tis necessary to speak of them, he must do it indirectly by a Circumlocution. *Martial* has ingeniously rally'd this Boyish Folly, in his Epigram on *Posthumus* a Roman Pleader.

*Non de Vi, neq; Cade, nec Veneno, &c.*

Lib. 6. E. 19.

My Lord, th' Indictment does not run  
On Houses fir'd, or Murders done;  
Three Goats are missing, says my Brief,  
And we tax *Mæris* for the Thief.  
Thus, read profoundly in the Laws,  
Our *Posthumus* unfolds his Cause.  
Well, to your Evidence proceed,  
Replies the Judge, and prove the Deed:  
The Serjeant kindles on his Stand,  
Prepares his Lungs, and waves his Hand;  
Then *Cannæ*, *Mithridates War*,  
The *Punick Perjury* and Fear;  
With *Scylla*, *Marius*, *Mutius*, all,  
He mows, and thunders thro the Hall.  
Dear *Posthumus*, enough of these,  
And now, for Heaven's sake, if you please,  
Come to the Text, and mind your Notes  
At length, and let us have the Goats.

\* *Bohours, Remarques sur le Langue Françoise.*

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A like Fault is that of others, who, to embellish their Stile, will prove the merest Trifle, which no body can be ignorant of, by the Authority of some illustrious Antient: as if a Man might not say the Sun shines, unless *Alphonsus* King of *Arragon*, or *Agefilans* had said it before him. These Coxcombs are as ridiculous as he wou'd be, who at an Entertainment, in order to persuade the Company to be merry, shou'd gravely address them: *The Venustian Swan* says no less truly than elegantly; *Nunc est bibendum, Now let us ply the Glasses.*

This Generation of Writers give a lofty Stile also to inconsiderable Subjects, and make *Tityrus* talk in a Pastoral, like *Antas* in the Epopee; and the old waiting Gentlewoman in their Plays, shall contend with the Princess her self in Sublimity and Magnificence of Sentences, and a Footman speak like an Emperor: They lament in an Elegy, like *Hercules* in his raving Fits; and their *Familiar Epistles* are compos'd, as if they were to be spoken in the Senate, or the Forum. But 'tis impossible to enumerate all the Blunders of this kind.

There is another sort of *Meteor*, which consists not in using a magnificent Stile on a mean Subject, but in using a vicious Sublimity on a Subject truly great. I call all that vicious Sublimity, which seems to be sublime to some Persons, but is not really so. They offend in this kind, who think every thing sublime, which is obscure. Ask them who are the sublimest Orators, and they'll tell you the Panegyriste on the *Cæsars*, or *Demostrian*,  
or

or some later Imitators of them : But *Cicero* ? he is not worth mentioning, the Boys at School can understand him. With them *Tacitus* is far beyond *Livy*, because he is more obscure : And *Penfius* is their Darling in Satyr, because after so many Comments of learned Men, his Sense is yet in the dark. They wonder *Virgil* shou'd carry the Prize in Epic Poetry, who is much easier to be understood than *Lucan*, *Statius*, *Claudian*, *Prudentius*, and several Moderns. They despise *Horace*'s Odes, where they understand him, but when he soars out of their Reach, they admire him, when he is sublime, and another *Pindar*.

A Man may wonder how it shou'd enter into any one's Head to affect Reputation, by writing obscurely, and to admire Obscurity in others, since Speech was not given us to darken, but to reveal our Thoughts. The Causes of this Error are many : For besides that Things which lie conceal'd are generally more regarded, some imagine that an Author, who, they agree, always understands his own Book, must necessarily be superior, in that respect, to you, who do not understand it, because he comprehends what you cannot. Others, because in their Childhood they cou'd not understand Writers who were truly sublime, have been accusom'd at School to confound the Notions of Obscurity and Sublimity together. 'Tis the same with them, who admire those who are great Authors. indeed, but yet are hard to be understood ; for 'tis common with us to admire the Virtues and Vices promiscuously of those whom we

we esteem. Lastly, others ascribe to the Author himself, the abundance of Wit and Learning, which is requir'd in Expositors to be able to comprehend him. And what must that be, which a *Heinsius*, a *Casaubon*, a *Grotius*, a *Salmaſtus*, or a *Scaliger* can scarcely penetrate?

I remember a Gentleman of this Taste was once boasting of his Eloquence to me in these Terms: *D'ye know*——ſays he, naming a Perſon of great Learning, *they cry him up for a wonderful Scholar; but no matter for that: I wiſh you had ſeen the Letter I writ to him a little while ago. I waited on him the next Day, and ask'd him, if he had receiv'd it. He told me, he had, and deſir'd I wou'd inform him what I meant by it. As if, ſaid I to him, you did not know. He ſwore he did not underſtand a word of it. I took pity on him, and expounded it to him: In ſhort, he was forc'd to confeſs, that if I had not come, he ſhou'd never have gueſs'd what it was: I deſign'd to tell him. At this he look'd me in the Face, and burſt into a Laugh; I laugh'd alſo: and let the Reader judg which of uſ had moſt Reaſon to laugh.*

If, beſides theſe Cauſes of affected Obſcurity, a Youth happens to have an inſipid Tutor, who is perpetually inculcating to him the *enotior, enotior* of \* *Quintilian*; that is, who commends to him the moſt intricate Writers above the reſt, that himſelf may be thought to underſtand them; and praiſes his Scholars, with the Rhetorician in the ſame Place, for their Obſcurity; ſo much the better,

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\* *Quintil. Inſtitut. Orator. lib. 8. c. 2.*

*I don't understand it my self:* 'tis easy to see whence his Pupil's Reverence for Obscurity proceeds. But a Man need not take Pains to be obscure, since, as Examples of many of the First-rate Writers testify, 'tis scarcely possible for us to avoid it, especially in the sublime *Stile*, when we endeavour to say lofty Things in lofty Words: for when we labour to form a great Image of a Thing in our Mind, we often croud so many Ideas together, that the Imagination is confounded and perplex'd; and we can't tell what it is we are conceiving, which necessarily renders the Expression dark and involv'd. Sometimes the Image is form'd distinctly in the Mind, but we are at a loss for Words equal to it; and while we seek too far for them, we become unintelligible. And sometimes we strive to comprize a great Thought in few Words, to increase the Force of the Expression; which, if rarely us'd, and with Perspicuity, makes a *Stile* very sublime: but how readily we slide from hence into Obscurity, the Instance of *Tacitus* declares. This is to be excus'd in great Writers, and not to be imitated, especially by those who can only imitate their Faults.

They also mistake *Meteors* for Sublimity, who think every thing to be sublime which is rare and extraordinary. They despise Words and Phrases of common use, and observe nothing in an Author as they read him, but what is seldom to be found. They throw aside *Cicero*, *Cæsar*, *Cornelius Nepos*, and *Terence*; for these afford no Materials for their Common-Place-Book. But *Barclay* has Charms,

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and

and supplies them with a Treasure of choice Words, Phrases, Forms, Sentences, and Tropes, as they chuse to call them. The Poets, particularly the Modern, have many Rarities; and, above all, *Prefaces, Inscriptions, and Programmata* abound with Phrases, according to their own Saying, *worthy Cedar and Gold*.

A huge Collection of this kind being made from the Poets, Orators and Philosophers of all Ages, they form a Stile at last, which is just like a Cabinet that is design'd to hold only the Wonders and Curiositys of Nature and Art.

These Men will never debase themselves so far as to call *Cicero, Cicero*; but are taught by their Phrase-Book to call him, *Arpinas noster*; *Plautus* is, *Familiaris noster Sarsinas*; and *Horace* must never be *Horace*, but, *Venusinus Cygnus, the Venusinian Swan*; and if they happen to compare him with *Virgil*, they'll tell you they are comparing \* *Tears* and *Sighing* together. As great a name as *Homer* is, he must not be call'd by that, but is to be express'd by a Scrap out of *Horace*, *Is qui nil molitur ineptè*; and *Martial* is *Bilbilitanus Argutor*. They can't speak of the most ordinary things, nor even put up their Addresses to Heaven, but it is the Gout of *Viridarius*, or some Book of Forms.

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\* This Expression is taken from a Saying of Augustus, who sitting once between *Virgil* and *Horace*, said merrily, he sat between *Sighing* and *Tears*: for one was troubled with an *Asthma*, and the other with *Rheumatick Eyes*.

But

But they are altogether mistaken, who esteem uncommon Expressions to be always sublime; *Cæsar* was of another Opinion, and said, *An unusual Word shou'd be shun'd like a Rock.* Monsters themselves wou'd be beautiful, if Rarity cou'd make them so. If in a serious and sublime Discourse, a Man shou'd use the fantastical Adjectives and Words of *Plautus*, as *ipsissimus, geminissimus, exclusissimus, occississimus, Sycolatronida, argenti exterebronida, fustitudinea, ferricrepina Insule*, which were invented only for the Stage, to set the Audience a laughing; who does not see it wou'd be utterly ridiculous? They who always call *Alexander* the *Pelleian Youth*, and *Aristotle* the *Stagyrite*, think they speak magnificently; as if the names *Alexander* and *Aristotle* had not much more Majesty in them. And wou'd not he bestow a very noble Appellation on the Emperor *Charles V.* and *Henry IV.* of *France*, that shou'd call one, the *Youth of Ghent*, and the other, the *Bernoise*? He who calls *Pindar*, *Thabana Lyra Fidicen, the Lutenist of Thebes*, imagines he speaks more grandly than one who only calls him *Pindar*; when at the same time he wou'd himself sooner be term'd *Pindar*, than the *Lutenist of Thebes*, or any other Place in the World. And thus some will not be prevail'd with, on any Terms, to say, in Latin, *Omnibus est notum*: No; it must be, according to their Phrase-Book, *Et Lippis & Tonsoribus est notum*. But 'tis to be presum'd, these honourable the *Lippi & Tonsores* are no great Grace to a magnificent Discourse. They fancy also, they extol a thing wonderfully, if they say 'tis



## A Discourse of

as exalted among the rest of its kind,

*Quantum lenta solent inter Viburnâ Cupressi :*

Never considering this is the Comparison, of an honest Countryman, whose knowledge lay chiefly in Fields, Meadows and Trees.

And thus *Figurative Words*, tho more rare than *proper*, are not therefore always more sublime : But we are so far from being *Gainers*, by changing the last for the former, that it is frequently a *Disadvantage* to us. In speaking of the Excellence of Man, it does not heighten the *Stile* to use *Mortal*, instead of the known and daily word *Man* ; and there is more Dignity in saying properly, *it thunders*, than in saying, *the Heavens bellow*. He that calls the Sea, *Fossam Ponti*, the great *Dyke*, wou'd use a more significant word, if he call'd it by the common name *Sea*. And so they don't mend themselves, who exchange the word *Earth*, for the *Great Ball*, and *Sea*, for *Neptune's Pond*, &c. because they reject a more significant word for a less. And the same may be said of rejecting a decent word for one unseemly and foul ; such as *Parro's Nubes aquam vomentes*, and *Furius's Jupiter Alpes nive conspuens* ; concerning which *Cicero* has wisely said, *Since 'tis a principal Beauty in a translated Word to have it strikethe Sense, we must be careful to avoid borrowing Words from such things as present an impure Idea to the Mind.* I wou'd not say, *the Republick was castrated by the Death of Scipio*, nor that *Glaucia is the Dunghil of Curia* ; for tho the *Similitude* is right, yet the *Thought* is sordid and unclean. Let them

De Ora-  
tore, 1.3.

consider

consider this, who delight to say, *vomit Cur-  
ses, belch out Blasphemys, piss on his Father's  
Ashes, &c.*

Neither do they distinguish a *Meteor* from Sublimity, who affect too exquisite an Ornament in the sublime Stile, and always hunt after measur'd Periods, Stops and Pauses, and Antitheses, and Comparisons, exactly answering one another; and contrive to repeat Words and Sounds in equal time, to begin and end alike; and to have round Sentences, unexpected Clauses, and a smart playing with Similitudes, Oppositions, and Ambiguities of Words; to rehearse Sayings and Actions of the Antients; and to bring, I will not say to haul, every thing in the World, by an ingenious Allegory, into their Subject. If some of these Particulars are sparingly us'd in a pleasant Discourse, they pass well enough; if they are thick sown, they are abominable, even in a ludicrous Argument; but in a serious and sublime one they are monstrous, and not to be endur'd, and are as indecent as if a grave Man shou'd go to dance a Jig in a publick Assembly.

These Delicacys were not much relish'd in *Augustus's* Age; *Ovid* alone seems to have pleas'd himself with them sometimes: but in *Nero's* Reign they began to be in fashion, as *Seneca's* Writings demonstrate; and a little after, Eloquence was made to consist wholly in them, as the Complaints of \* *Petronius* and *Quintilian* inform us.

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\* *Petron. Init. Satyr. Quintil. lib. 1, 8.*

Epist. ad  
Pamma-  
chium.

From hence this Custom pass'd into the Church: *Christians and Priests of God, says Jerom, are not asham'd to pun, and trifle with ambiguous Sentences, which deceive the Speaker more than the Hearer, as if they were handling some ridiculous Subject.* Many of the Fathers have stuff'd their Writings with these Foolerys, and propagated them to our Age; and so heartily are they embrac'd by some of our Preachers, that Posterity, I question not, will inherit them. In the mean while, 'tis to be lamented, that Men shou'd trifle most in those Discourses, in which they ought to trifle least.

περὶ ἰσχυ-  
ρειας.

When these Decorations are aptly and judiciously employ'd, they sometimes render a Style more witty and gay, but never more great and sublime: for they detract as much from the Gravity of a Discourse, as they add to the Spriteliness of it; and *Demetrius* says rightly; ἡ ὁμοιότης, &c. *Similitudes, affected Periods and Antitheses, enervate and debase a Style.* And the same may be said of all Ornaments of this sort: An elegant Example of which we have in *Ausonius's* Epigram on the Death of *Dido*;

*Infelix Dido, nulli bene nupta Marito;  
Hoc pereunte fugis, hoc fugiente peris.*

Poor *Dido* ne'er a happy Husband try'd:  
When the first dy'd, she fled; and when this  
fled, she dy'd.

Nothing can be more delicate, and yet nothing can be less sublime: for he that reads this will not pity the Death of *Dido*, but admire

mire the Wit of the Poet ; and the Beauty of the Antithesis, and the apt turn on the words, *fugere* and *perire*, *fly* and *die*, have no other effect on us than to make us forget her. St. *Augustin*, who cou'd not read the Death of *Dido*, in *Virgil's* fourth *Æneid*, without Tears, wou'd certainly never have moisten'd his Eyes at this Epigram.

A sublime Stile will admit a more sparing Ornament, sometimes, but not always ; for if the Image we form in our Mind is truly great, it will appear the greater, the more simply 'tis express'd : as a very beautiful Person is not so much adorn'd, as hid by a gaudy Dress ; and delicious Meats are spoil'd by a-bundance of Seasoning, and the Sweetness of a fine Voice is lost in an excessive Shake. In short, whatever looks best in its Simplicity, ought to be left so. That in *Genesis*, GOD said, *Let there be Light, and there was Light ; let the Earth appear, and the Earth appear'd ;* the Sublimity of which *Longinus* so much commends, is so sublime because it is so plain. cap. 7.

And if some Parts in a sublime Discourse are to have the Ornament of Words, we shou'd be careful that the Ornament shew it self as little as possible. The Rules of Architecture require, that those Pillars, which are added to a magnificent Building, for the sake of Decoration, shou'd look as if they were continu'd under the Basis, for the sake of Necessity, to bear up the weight of the Pile. And thus in a Discourse, that which is to adorn it, shou'd not seem introduc'd with that Design, but as necessary to sustain the Force and Grandeur of the Theme.

We must also observe a Mean in our Ornaments, lest we divert a Reader from the Passions we intend to excite in him, to admire the Delicacys of the Stile, and other mechanical Graces; as they do, who, as *Quintilian* says, *weep in Sentences, and beg in Periods*: by which they only succeed to have those who are pleas'd with the Harangue say, they heard an elegant Oration, but they are neither mov'd nor chang'd by any thing that was said in it.

Lib. 11, 12

And under this Head Periphrases are to be consider'd, which many affect, but which do not always increase the Sense in proportion as they multiply the Words; but when they happen to be flat and heavy, they enervate a Discourse, and by the number of Words cast a Cloud on the Vigour and Sublimity of the Sentence. How sublime is this of *Virgil*,

*Et Campus ubi Troja fuit !*

Where *Troy* then stood, is all a common Field.

Put this into a Paraphrase, and most of the Sublimity of it vanishes. *Lucan* having pompously describ'd the universal Consternation of *Rome* upon *Cesar's* Approach, adds,

*Danda tamen Venia est, tantorum danda Pavorum,*

*Pompejo fugiente timent.*

Lib. 1.

Forgive these Terrors of Imperial *Rome*,  
Her *Pompey* fled the Fears.

*Pompejo*

*Pompejo fugiente timent.* The Poet has said more here in three Words, than if he had set out the Bravery and Worth of *Pompey*, and the Circumstances and Consequence of his Flight, ever so largely. I wou'd have them also apply this, who never permit a Substantive to go unattended, but send some splendid Epithet along with him to bear him Company.

Farther ; they do not distinguish a *Meteor* from Sublimity, who think Sublimity consists in high-sounding Words, that promise somewhat considerable under them, but signify nothing extraordinary : *Horace* calls this, in a Poem,

*Versus inopes rerum, nugæque canoras.*  
Art. Poet.

*Verses empty of Sense, and sounding Trifles.* They who affect them, are either ignorant what constitutes true Greatness of Stile, or not being able to obtain it, wou'd conceal the Deficiency of their Wit by a Plenty of sounding Words ; as a gaudy Sute of Clothes sometimes hides Beggary and Want.

These are not solicitous what they say, or whether they say any thing, so they can but, as a great Master in this Art expresses it,

Sedul. l. i.  
Operis  
Pascualis.

*Grandisonis pompare Modis, Tragicoq; Boatu.*

Swell out their Speech with bellowing words, and a tragick Fury. *Resonantia, undantia, rorantia, rutilantia, radiantia, flammantia, coruscantia, tumultuantia, bacchantia, quadrupedantia,*

## A Discourse of

*dantia*, are all admirable Words to fill the Mouth, and make a graceful Rumble, and then all is well; no matter for Sense, or Connexion, or any thing of that nature: the sound of *Carpasium Pelagus, aestuantis Adria sinus, fulgurent, quaquavorsum omnia quatiant*, &c. is Elegance enough, and wou'd almost tempt a Man to believe the Stile wonderfully sublime; but if you look to the Sense, you will find it is only a *Meteor*.

For this reason it is, that many prefer the Poets of the worst Age to those who flourish'd in the time of *Augustus*; they imagine *Claudian* begins his *Rape of Proserpine* in a much loftier Stile, than *Virgil* does his *Æneids*, or *Ovid* his *Metamorphoses*.

\* *Inferni Raptoris Equos, afflataque curru  
Sidera Tenario, caligantesque profunda  
Junois Thalamos, audaci promere cantu,  
Mens congesta jubet.*

Let us see, by this Example, if a Pomp of Words cannot impose on a Reader, to make what he reads seem greater than it is. Those ambitious Epithets, *Raptor infernus, Currus Tenarius, Thalami caligantes, Juno profunda, Cantus audax*, and *Mens congesta*, are more founding than significant; and how shall we construe, *Mens congesta jubet promere* or pro-

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\* The horrid Horses, and sulphureous Car,  
Which bore aloft th' Infernal Ravisher;  
And, rising from the dismal Shades of Night,  
Obscur'd the Stars, and blotted all their Light:  
The darksome Spousals of the ravish'd Fair,  
My daring Verse adventures to declare.

dr

*dere*, as others read it, *Cantu Equos & Sidera curru afflata*? I had rather the Poet had open'd with singing the barbarous Act of *Pluto*, the cruel Hands of the Ravisher, and the rough Arms which seiz'd the Daughter of *Jupiter*, the sole Delight of *Ceres*, a Goddess deserving perpetual Day, and carry'd her down in their rude Gripe, vainly crying out to her Father and Mother, thro the vast Abyss to everlasting Shades.

But *Claudian* begins with nothing of this; the Ravisher's Horses appear, the Chariot follows, and *Proserpine* is not seen till she is in the Nuptial Bed, when she is now become the *neither Juno*, perhaps lest the Rape shou'd have touch'd us with Commiseration. The Marriage-Bed is call'd *darksom*, which they will think no Misfortune, who do not desire Light in such a Place. *Claudian*, therefore, has neither conceiv'd nor express'd a great Image of the Action, which is his Subject, in the Barbarity of which the Horses of *Pluto*, and his Chariot and *Proserpine's* Nuptials are not concern'd: 'Tis the Rape it self is the principal Part. But our Poet has manag'd just like a Limner, who shou'd paint a Chariot, drawn by four Horses, closely cover'd up; and in another Quarter, at a remoter Distance, a Bed in the Dark, with this Inscription, *The Rape of Proserpine*. How much better does *Ovid* begin his *Metamorphoses*,

*In nova fert animus mutatas dicere formas,  
Corpora*——

He



He sums in few Words, and those perspicuous, the whole Grandeur of his Argument; to say nothing of the beginning of the *Æneid*, and the second Book of *Lucretius*, than which hardly any thing can be more sublime.

'Tis not to be wonder'd at, if the Verses of some modern Poets, that were not comparable to *Claudian*, who we allow had a great deal of Fire, have the same Misfortune to carry more Sound than Sense: For 'tis much easier to collect shining Words out of the Poets, or from the *Thesauri Phrasum Poeticarum*, as some do, than to produce a noble Image in the Mind.

But of all *Meteors*, none have a greater appearance of Sublimity, than those which *Quintilian* calls *precipitia*, and others *tumida*, *turgida*, and *inflata*; which are swollen, and flatulent, and full of Tumor. A Tumor in Stile, is a certain Excess of Elevation, into which all are betray'd, who possess a Strength of Imagination rather than of Judgment; and whenever they wou'd speak magnificently, make use of every thing that serves to exalt a Stile, but observe no Decency or Moderation.

If these Persons wou'd form a *great* Image, they form a *vast* one; instead of a sublime one, they make one which is enormous; and for an admirable one, they invent one wholly incredible and prodigions. They can't think of a tall Man, but they make him a Giant, and they magnify a valiant Man into a perfect Romance-Hero. 'Tis a noble Image of

In *Lælio*. Friendship in *Cicero*, when he says, *Non Aqua, non Igni, non Aere pluribus in locis utimur quam Amicitia:*

*Amicitia*: Not Water, nor Air, nor Fire are us'd in more Places than Friendship is. But if any one, in order to outgo Cicero, shou'd say, Friendship is us'd in far more Places than Air, he wou'd stretch it beyond just Bounds. To say, It is come to this pass, that no body is asham'd of Wickedness, but many glory in it, is a great Idea of a corrupt Age, but it wou'd be overlasting to say with Seneca, *Nullum intra se manet hodie Vitium, adeo unusquisque sua amat, ut nolit peccare, nisi ad se Testis*. Vice does not now lie reserv'd within it self, but every one is so in love with his own, that 'tis his Ambition to sin before Witnesses.

Epist. 93.

They who are pleas'd with such Meteors, give their Fancy sometimes as great a loose in Prose as the Poets can do in Verse, and even a greater. D. Brutus, says one of them, Florus, conquer'd the Gallæcians, and all the People of Gallæcia, and the River of Oblivion so dreadful to the Soldiers; and march'd not back till he had travers'd the Shore of the Ocean, and seen the Sun sinking into the Sea, and the Fire extinguish'd in the Water; not without an awful Fear of having committed a sacrilegious Presumption. Another thus describes a temperate Region: No Clouds ever ruffle the Sky, no Frosts destroy, nor Summer-Heats scorch up the Corn. If they praise a wise Man, they'l say, He is harder than Adamant; Darts are so far from piercing him, that even Battering Rams and Engines of War, which lay flat the highest Towers, and beat down the strongest Forts, cannot shake him. He is firmer than the Walls of Babylon, of Carthage, and of Numantia, and the Capitol it self. Let a shower of Arrows be cast

Barclay.

Seneca.

on

## A Discourse of

Relation  
d' Es-  
pagne.

on him, they will not wound or hurt him, nay they will not touch him. When they extol any King or Prince, he is more *Alexander* and *Julius Caesar*, than *Alexander* and *Cesar* were themselves; and if the Fervor of Imagination increases in them, then the whole World is not a Base sufficient to support his Statue; there is not Paper enough in the Universe to describe his Virtues, nor can it be perform'd with a Pen; it ought to be written with the Sun-Beams.

But in Verse, what will not an impetuous Imagination, unrestrain'd by the Judgment, presume? Because many things are permitted, it believes all are. Nothing is too vast and monstrous for it to produce: Sometimes it is in the Clouds, then groveling on the Ground; now 'tis wrap'd above the World, and mingles Heaven and Earth together.

*Cum variare volet rem prodigialiter unam,  
Delphinum Sylvis appingit, fluctibus aprum.*

Art. Poet.

When such a Versificator, says *Horace*, has a mind to vary his Subject in an extraordinary manner, he'll send the Dolphin into the Woods, and the Boar into the Water. One tells us of some Soldiers who were so set upon fighting, That they continu'd to fight after Death, not considering they were dead. Another says of a Mound, The Poets wou'd have plac'd it among the Signs of the Zodiack, but that they fear'd its Height and Strength wou'd hinder the Course of the Sun.

If they describe a Tempest tossing the Sea, they take their full Swing: The Winds wage Wars,

Wars, the North-Wind prevails; he not only raises the Waves, but shoves whole Seas out of their Place; the *Ægean*, and *Tyrrhene*, the *Ionian* and *Adriatick* Seas are mix'd: The other Winds possess the Ocean; the Earth is delug'd, the Sea has no Shore, and is restrain'd only by Heaven.

*Tunc quoque tanta Maris Moles crevisset in  
Astra,  
Ni superum Rector precessisset Nubibus Undas.*  
Lucan. lib. 5.

Above the Stars had swell'd th' aspiring  
Flood,  
But Jupiter with Clouds the rising Seas sub-  
du'd.

And even in Sacred Subjects their Fancy is as  
licentious. *Homer* might be allow'd to feign  
Monsters of Deitys, and make them be wound-  
ed by Men; upon which Mischance the  
Champion *Mars* roar'd out,

*Οὐδὲν τ' ἐν τεύχεσσι ἐπὶ λαχόν ἢ δεινὰ χροί.*  
Iliad. 5.

As loud as nine or ten thousand Men (for he  
cou'd not certainly tell which) shouting to the  
Battel. But who can endure a Christian \*Po-  
et feigning these Events at our Saviour's  
Birth,

—*Stellatæque Machina Mundi  
Proscripsit fœrale Fubar, micuere secundo*

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\* *Barlaeus Hymno in Christum*, lib. 1. Heroicor.  
Omine

## A Discourse of

*Omine Siderea Facies: dum Pignora Cælum  
 Tanta sibi promissa putat: sua Frigora fulgens,  
 Egoceros mediâ voluit mitescere Brumâ,  
 Et tepuit glacialis Hiems, decessit Olympo  
 Arctophylax, fugitque socia cum Conjuge Cephæus,  
 Et Chiron, Perseusq; furens, & Plejas & ipse  
 Amphitryoniades.*

The Starry Lights all baleful Rays suspend,  
 And on the World the kindest Influence  
 send;

Expecting awfully the great Event;  
 And in Mid-Winter Frosts and Snows re-  
 lent:

*Arctophylax* in haste forsook the Skys,  
 And *Cephæus* with his tender Consort flies,  
 And *Chiron*, *Perseus*, *Plejas*, *Hercules*. }

Not to mention the Mixture of Christian Mysterys here with the absurd Fables of the Gentiles; in which Christian Poets sometimes strangely indulge themselves.

And since those who have more Wit than Judgment, aim at a Sublimity in Words as well as in Sense, they never scruple to adventure on any Expression, but pursue after Tropes and Metaphors from one end of the World to the other; that which does not conform of it self, is put on the Rack, and made to comply by Force. Unnatural Periphrases are spun out, which cannot be pronounc'd in a Breath: whatever is surprizing in the Universe, the Heaven with its Climes and all the Stars, the People of all Lands and Nations, all the Seas, Lakes, Rivers and Mountains,

Mountains, all the Gods and Goddesses; in short, all Monsters and Prodigys are listed into the Service, and made to furnish their Names, Surnames and Epithets to our Writers, to accomplish the Grandeur of their Discourse. *Neptune* must contribute his Trident, *Minerva* her Gorgon Shield, *Phæbus* his Chariot and his Horses, *Mercury* his Wings for the Feet, and *Hercules* his Club, and *Jupiter* his threebolted Thunder. With them *Xerxes* \* is no longer King of the *Persians*, but the *Jupiter* of the *Persians*; Vultures are not Birds of Prey, but living *Sepulchres*; the *Heliotrope* is the † *Methusalem of Flowers*; Arrows don't fly in the Air, but || feather'd Deaths possess the Skys: they don't exclaim, in the usual Phrase, *Quid primum, quid deinde dicam?* What shall I mention first, and what last? but, *Quas Aristas Horreis inferam, quas relinquam?* What Sheafs shall I carry into the Barn, and what shall I leave out? One of these Oratorical Panegyrist thus hastens to a Conclusion: \*\* *I confess, being vanquish'd by the Grandeur of your Deeds, and blinded with the Light of the Antients, I am willing to descend in the close of my Oration, and omit new Triumphs. Thus, if I had a mind to number the Ornaments*

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\* Vide Longin. c. 2. † Gongora a Spanish Poet.  
|| Ennod. Paneg. Theodoric. dist.

\*\* Vellem, fateor, ad orationis Terminum victus Gestorum tuorum enormitate descendere, & novellas Adoreas, hebetatus Priscorum Luce, transire. Quemadmodum si ætherei Axis in numerum redigere Ornamenta voluisssem, & Trionum Fulgore comprehenso, Cœli Decorem impotenti Linguâ describere, cederet divino Splendori mortalis Obscuritas, jubaris Lampadi non sufficeret humilium scintilla Sermonum.

## A Discourse of

of the *Aethereal Axis*, and comprehending the Splendor of the illustrious *Wain*, to describe with my weak Tongue the Glory of the Heavens, mortal Obscurity would yield to Divine Lustre, and the Sparkle of groveling Words wou'd not suffice to express the radiant Lamp above.

Single and uncompounded Words also will not pass muster, if they happen to be commonly us'd; there is not Dignity, or Sound, or Sense enough in them to please these curious Authors: Therefore new ones are to be coin'd, and old ones restor'd, where the present are not to their measure: *Dolphins* must not be *Delphini*, in Latin, but *Repandirostrum* & *incurvicervicum Pecus*; a great Danger is *Hypobrychium irrespirabile*; a Goat is *Animal reciprocicorne*; a Boar *Nemorivagus*; a Hind *Sylvicultrix*, &c. And here the Poetical Compounds of *Gero* and *Fero* stand them in stead; after the Example of which they can form several others; and Nouns Surperlatives, and Patronymicks; and Verbs, as the Grammarians call them, frequentative, inchoative, imitative, and desiderative: and, in short, all words of a foot and a half, one of which shall take up a Line to it self, are greedily sought out.

When I said above, that it conduc'd to the Sublimity of Stile, to make it bear the Impressions of a great and lofty Mind, many, who cannot discern true Magnanimity from Pride, will believe that to be sublime, which is really insolent and profane; which argues not a Contempt of little things, but of things far superior to the Contemner himself, and of the highest Importance: and this is not a Sign

Sign of a great, but of a proud and vain-glorious Mind.

Such a Meteor is the impious Return of Pharaoh, Who is the Lord that I shou'd obey his *Exod. 5.* Voice? And that of Senacherib, Who are they, *2.* among all the Gods of the Countrys, that have *2 Kings* deliver'd their Country out of my Hand? And *18. 35.* Of Nebuchadnezzar, I will ascend above the *Isa. 14. 14.* Heights of the Clouds, I will be like the most High. These are the swelling Speakers, who, as the Psalmist says, speak loftily, who set their *Psal. 73.* Mouth against the Heaven, and whose Tongue *8, 9.* walks thro the Earth. And such is the Saying, by some attributed to Augustus, that he wou'd gain the Victory even in despite of Neptune. And that also of Caligula, who thus threaten'd his God Jupiter; *'Eis γὰρ Δαναῶν περὶ αὐτοῦ* *εἰ, I'll send you packing to Greece again.* With the like Arrogance Domitian order'd his Procurators Letters to begin in this Form: *Dominus & Deus noster sic fieri jubet; Our Lord God commands it to be thus.*

The Poets are often guilty of this, and when they design to say something great and sublime, fall into proud and impious Expressions. So Lucan says of Nero, who succeeded to Princes that had obtain'd the Empire by Civil Wars and many Villanys: *Scelera ipsaque nefasque hac mercede placent; Evil and Injustice are welcome when attended with such a Recompence.* And comparing Caesar's Party and Pompey's, he says,

*Villex Causa Diis placuit, sed victa Catoni.*



Hercul.  
Oetæi,  
Act. 1.  
Scen. 1.

The Gods chose the conquering Side, but Cato the conquer'd. He opposes, if not prefers, a single Cato to all the Gods. Hercules in Seneca, if Seneca is the Author of that Tragedy, thus demands of Jupiter to be receiv'd into Heaven: *Why dost thou delay? Art thou afraid of me? Or cannot Atlas support the weight of Hercules added to the Heavens? Hasten Jupiter, and make the Gods safe in my Protection: You may lay aside your Thunder. I will undertake to secure you, whether you assign me the Frozen or the Torrid Zone to defend. Be satisfy'd, and believe the Gods safe under my Care.* This is the Speech of a Typhon or Enceladus, not of a Hero. Martial's Epigram to Domitian, in which he wishes him a long Life, is not unlike it:

*Esse velis, precor, serus Conviva Tonantis;  
At tu si properas, Jupiter, ipse veni.*

*Mayst thou late become the Thunderer's Guest; but if thou art in haste to ascend thy Heaven, Jupiter, do thou come down, and supply his Room.*

This Custom of the Poets to accuse, reproach, and upbraid the Gods, is proud and impious; and so are those Forms of Speech, by which the Gods are said, *invidia exonerari, probari, absolvi*: and indeed all Expressions, which intimate a Contempt of Things that are by no means to be despis'd; such as are Things sacred, Probity, Piety, Justice and other Virtues, excellent Men, shining Actions and Sayings, Kings and Magistrates, our Country, Parents, Rights, Laws, and Customs, &c. Expressions which signify Contempt

tempt of these, have nothing of true Greatness in them.

If they happen to strike us with some appearance of Sublimity, when utter'd boldly, and with a confident Air, it is, because we are all proud Creatures, and are not only pleas'd to see our selves lifted above inferior things, which won'd not be a Fault; but at the same time that we debase our selves beneath things really mean and vile, we haughtily elevate us above those which are truly excellent, as it were in revenge, to recover the Dignity we shamefully gave away to the other. Hence such Sayings, as flatter this Vanity, are receiv'd with wonderful Pleasure, and we regard them as delightful Reflections of our own Majesty and Grandeur, and therefore applaud them as sublime. This, wise Men assign as the Reason why an Audience is so transported with the Sublimity of any Discourse; which is rightly judg'd, if they do but remember to distinguish between true Sublimity of Mind and Stile, and a vain flatulence of both.

But 'tis not a Fault in Writers, who introduce Persons of an imperious Temper speaking, to make them express their Pride in their Speech. When *Servius Tullius* reprimanded the rebellious *Tarquin*, in these words; *What is this, Tarquin, which you have done? Livy. How dare you insolently assemble the Senate during my Life? or place your self in my Seat? Livy* admirably puts this Answer into *Tarquin's* Mouth: That he fill'd his Father's Seat, rather as a King's Son, the Heir of his Kingdom, than as a Slave; and that *Servius* had

long enough presumptuously insulted over his Superiours. This was Pride in *Tarquin* who spoke it, but it is sublime in *Livy*, who has drawn a strong Image of his Pride in the Expressions. When the Nurse, in *Seneca's Medea*, objected to her, that of all her abundant means, she had nothing now left her to revenge the Inconstancy of *Jason*, the Sorceress replys ;

*Medea superest, heic Mare & Terras vides,  
Ferrumque & Ignes, & Deos, & Fulmina.*

*Medea* her self remains ; in her thou hast Earth, Sea, and Fire, Daggers, the Gods, and Thunder too. *Medea*, who says this, is proud, impious and raving, but *Seneca* excellently paints the Rage of a revengeful Woman in these words. On which account also, the *Meteors* of *Polyphemus* in *Ovid* are not to be censur'd ; the Eloquence of *Polyphemus* is horrid, but the Verse of *Ovid* is beautiful : for here, not the Thing which is represented, but the Representation of it ought to please us.

I shall now treat of the third sort of *Meteors*, which is so compounded of the two former, that not only the Subject of a sublime Discourse shall be mean and low, but also the Sublimity of the Stile shall be vicious. These do not want their Admirers, Persons who are so far from knowing how to condescend, that they ennoble the most vulgar things with a bloated Stile. With them Birds are call'd, *Pennata Tibia*, or, *alati Poeta* : a Virgin is, in Greek, *μῆρας* ; and a Dunghil-Cock, *ἰσθμῶς*. Ask one of these Gentlemen what Business he

he follows, and perhaps he shall answer from *Sedulius*: *Ego decachordo Psalteria inter beati Dogmatis Choros Davidice Modulationis Cantus exerceo*; meaning, that he is a Chantor of a Quire. Ask another, how he is, and he'll tell you, *Satis bene se in Caruncula Folliculo constitutum esse*; and if he is writing, he'll say, *Se aliquid Niliaci Papyro Gurgitis Calamo per-* *Sedulius* *rante contradere*. And if you ask in what Year such a thing was done, he shall answer in this Description; *Past Tempora incarnati Verbi, ignea Romphen in officio Paradisi fonte lateris Christi extincta, ut Regnum Dei violentius raperetur*: or if his Madness runs more on a big Word than on Periphrases, he'll reply from some old Record, that it happen'd such or such a Prelate, *Archiepiscopans*, or such a King. \* *Ptolomans*; and if he wou'd speak more floridly, he'll say, such a Gentleman landed in *Sicily* †, when the World had not yet worship'd Rome, nor the Ocean submitted to the Tyber. Nay, 'tis a hundred to one, but he bids his Servant pull off his Boots, in the form of a certain magnificent Rhetorician: *Tu qui me inferior es, innisere Corporis tui Columnis, & ab his mortui Bovis Exuvii me libera*. Thou who art my Inferior, plant thee on the Pillars of thy Body, and free me from these Spoils of the slaughter'd Ox.

One invited his Friend into the Country in the Summer-Time, thus ||: *Jam Per decedit*

\* Glossar. du Fresne, Verb. *Ptolomare*.

† Nondum Orbis adoraverat Romam; nondum Oceanus concesserat Tybri.

|| Sidon. Apollinat. Epist. ad Demitium, lib. 2. Epist. 2.

*Æstati,*

*Æstati, &c.* The Spring has now resign'd to the Summer, and the Sun, exalted thro' the extreme Lines, extends his Beams to the Scythian Axis. The World grows warm, the Alpine Frost melts away, and the Earth is inscrib'd with thirsty Chinks; the Gravel lies naked in the Fords, the Mud on the River Banks, and the Dust in the Roads; and the Fountains, perpetually gliding, languish in their Course. The Waters are not only warm'd, but boil'd: and now, while one sweats in Sattin, and another in Silk, thou, swath'd and wrap'd in thy Rugs and Freeze, and pent up in the close Town, drowsily callest on thy Boys, who are pale with Heat and Fear, to construe. But if thou hast any Value for thy Health, withdraw thy self immediately from the stifling City, and post down to my Lodgings, and in this gentle Retreats deceive the Inclemency of the Dog-Star. A vigilant \* Reader, who has employ'd a voluptuous Patience in reading the Epistles of Sidonius Apollinaris, Bishop of Clermont, will easily know the Style. And this ingenious Author is always so constant to himself, that he can't salute a Man, but he breaks out into a Salutation; but when he writes to the Pope, i. e. to a Bishop, his Brother, he has the Happiness even to exceed himself: The || Croud of the College, he tells him, tremble at him; and, in comparison of his Gravity, the most reverend Seniors are mere Children: The spiritual Warriors regard him as a principal Standard-bearer of each Order of Saints, who reaches out the Hand of his Tongue to all wounded Consciences. 'Tis

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\* These are Sidonius's Words.

|| Sidonius ad Papam Lupum, Epist. 1. lib. 6.

no wonder now, that when he made his Submission to the Pope, he stil'd himself *Drudge* and *Lacquey*, and even *Fellow-Leper* with the leprous Man in the Gospel.

But 'tis in *Africk* that the most terrible *Meteors* have been produc'd. The whole Book of *Martian Capell* is one of them; the Title, *De Nuptiis Philologiae & Mercurii*, *The Marriage of Philology and Mercury*, seems to promise some extraordinary Matter. Accordingly he begins it with an Invocation of *Hymen* in magnificent Verse, and proceeds with the perfect Air of a Romance; all the Gods and Goddesses are brought into the Scene, and the Muses take their Turns to sing an *Epithalamium*. At length the Bride is led into *Jupiter's House*, whose Bulk was the *World's Circumference*, and which excel'd the Lustre of the Stars in its shining Decorations, and stretch'd across the *Zodiack* by the Newness of its Site. Our Author condescends to talk thus, when he has a mind to be understood; but generally he is pleas'd to be far more obscure. The first and second Books, and the beginning of the third, carry you thro a blind Labyrinth, I know not whither; and, when you have made your way thro this cloudy Maze into known Ground, you arrive at an Exposition of *Grammar*, the *Reason of Letters*, *Syllables and Words*. And hence you travel on to the *Predicables of Logick*, and at last you discover, the Design of this Heroick Fiction is to lay down general Precepts of the *Liberal Arts*.

*Tertullian's* Treatise *De Pallio*, of the Cloak, does not yield to this dreadful Meteor. an Ace.  
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The *Africans* had reproach'd him for laying by the Gown, and taking up the Cloak : and he cou'd not forgive the Affront, but to revenge himself writ his *Apologia Pallii*, *The Apology of the Cloak* ; where, after he has mention'd all the Changes of every kind, which an unlimited Imagination was able to suggest, in order to justify his own, and made several extraordinary Flourishes about the Cloak, he introduces the Cloak it self thus speaking : *Away ! I will repress Ambition, and remove Impurity ; Blemishes and Defects are cover'd over by me ; 'tis I clothe the first Teacher of Writers and Former of the Voice, the first Instructor in Numbers, and the Grammarian, the Rhetorician and Sophist, the Physician and Poet, and he that exercises Musick, and the Magician ; my four-corner'd Robe covers all the liberal Study.* What Man ever talk'd more magnificently than this illustrious Garment ? I wou'd have oblig'd the Reader with its Speech at large ; but that its Stile in the rest is more obscure, in which Excellence it even goes beyond its Master.

To these two *African* Writers I may add a third, *Apuleius*, who abounds with Metaphors, as you may observe, *Mado si Papyrus Egyptianam*, to borrow one from the first Page of his *Metamorphosis*, *tu, Argusia Nilotici Calami inscriptam, non spreveris inspicere*. But this Author is in every one's hands, and is so highly in grace with some, that if a Man finds fault with him, they presently draw a Sentence of *Apuleius* upon him, and say he is *Invidia nefaria letali Plaga percussus*. And who in his Senses would speak against him, since

since *Lipſius* himſelf is not afraid to vindicate his *Stile* againſt *iſti de Arpinati Schola invecſtes Pueri*, as he elegantly calls the Admirers of *Cicero*?

'Tis to be wiſh'd this prodigious Eloquence were not infus'd into Boys at School: For hence the firſt Corruption of *Stile* proceeds; a great many retaining that Notion of Sublimity, which they receiv'd from their Tutor, thro' their whole Life: and if he has a falſe Taſte himſelf, the Children are betray'd into the ſame Error; unleſs they happen to poſſeſs ſuch a degree of Judgment in their given Years, as *Adrian Valeſius* ſays was in his Brother *Henry*. The thing is worth relating: *Præceptor Henrici vocabatur Ruſellus*, &c. *Henry's Preceptor* was call'd *Ruſell*; a very honeſt Man, but unlearn'd, and ignorant of the Art he profeſs'd: In Proſe he affect'd the Eloquence of bloated and high-ſounding Words, and to uſe the utmoſt *Majeſty* and *Cadence*, and *Descriptions* which were not tolerable even in *Verſe*, on the moſt trivial Subject. Such is his *Description* of the *Day-break*, which *Valeſius* wou'd frequently repeat with a mighty Air of Gravity. It began to grow light, and *Aurora* iſſuing forth as the Herald of a fuller Light to come, the Riſing Sun comb'd his Locks yellow with Gold, and ſhot his Rays on high. *Valeſius*, ſays *Adrian*, had been ruin'd, if he had imitated his *Preceptor*; but the Judgment of the Scholar prevail'd over the bad Example of the Maſter. How many Teachers are there who wou'd bleſs themſelves, if they cou'd but reach this pitch of *Ruſell*? for tho' they can't ſoar ſo high, they appear very ſublime in their own



own Opinion, if they can instruct their Pupils to begin an Epistle thus: *Salutem a Fonte Salutis, Amice medullitus peramande*; and to close, *Tuus per Saxa per Ignes, &c.*

But *Meteors* are to be found in modern Languages out of the Schools. The *Italian* Writers are full of them, and so are the *Spanish*, and many of the *German* copy after them. The present *French* are much more reform'd than their Forefathers, and abandoning these false Splendors, have arriv'd to understand the true manner of writing, if they can but preserve it. 'Tis very difficult for that Nation to retain any thing long; but if they shou'd persevere, they wou'd make the nearest Approach to the antient Eloquence of *Greece* and *Rome*, in the time of *Demosthenes* and *Cicero*. But there is a sort of *Meteors* in all modern Tongues, which was unknown to the Antients; I mean those Forms in which we testify Respect and Deference, call'd *Complements*, which the *Greeks* and *Romans* had no word to express, and which some call *Terms of Honour*. Here by great and swelling Words, hardly any thing is signify'd; for *most humble and most obedient Servant*, or *Slave*, means no more than the *Grecian* *palpe*, and *Ave* with the *Latins*; not to mention other Forms more tedious and highflown. I wou'd not persuade any to omit these, when the Fashion has made them necessary; but 'twere to be wish'd ingenious Men wou'd by degrees unlearn so trifling a Custom, and that so many useless and impertinent Words might not continue to puff up and enervate our Discourse.

F I N I S.





